

*Partir pour mieux rester?*¹

A Study of French Africa Policy from 1981
until today.

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¹ "Leave to better remain", the "motto of French decolonisation" according to Stephen Smith (Smith 2010, author's translation).

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Abstract

In this thesis, I have studied to what extent international structural changes and personal relationships between French and African leaders can explain the evolution of French Africa policy the last three decades. The changes on which the thesis focused were the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China on the African continent. To study this, neorealist and neopatrimonial theories were employed.

The findings indicate that the consequences of the end of the Cold War on French Africa policy were delayed because of the close, and neopatrimonial, ties between French and African leaders. After the Chinese presence gained in strength in the last ten years, French policy has changed more dramatically. For instance, recent years have seen French Africa policy going over to focus more on business, and some findings indicate that one is also seeing a revival of neopatrimonial ties. However, to what extent it is the Chinese emergence as an important player on the African continent that explains this is uncertain. In order to fully study the consequences for French policy there is a need for more analytical distance.

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All faults and errors are mine alone.

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1 Introduction

1.1 France and Africa

The summer of 2009 saw the death of one of Africa's longest serving presidents, Omar Bongo of Gabon. For over forty years, he had ruled the small country in West Africa, coincidentally one of the richest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (BBC 2009a). Omar Bongo was one of the living reminders of the close relationship between France and Africa. When he died, he had a huge, but secret, fortune, some of it in his large estates in France (BBC 2009b).

Since colonial times, France has had close relations with its former colonies in francophone Sub-Saharan Africa. Several of the leaders in these countries have had personal experience from France, either through the military or their education. Some were even elected to sit in the French Parliament, an example being the Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny. As an illustration of how these relations could be formed, future French president François Mitterrand sat in Parliament at the same time as Houphouët-Boigny, in the 1940s (Hansen 2009:179). Such experiences were an important element in the formation of close Franco-African relations. Not only were the relations close, but Africa was also an important vehicle for promoting French power and influence after decolonisation. The French president who presided over the decolonisation, Charles de Gaulle, had therefore no wish to end the close Franco-African bonds (Chafer 2005:8).

Over the following decades however, the apparent consensus over French policy seemed to have weakened. With the arrival of François Mitterrand as president in 1981, there were expectations of change in French Africa policy (Whiteman 1983:329). Such calls continued with varying intensity throughout Jacques Chirac's two periods into the current presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy. During the last three decades, the policy has thus become more contested. Nonetheless, the extent to which French Africa policy has actually changed remains an open question. According to Ketil Fred Hansen (2009:175), there can be said to be three ways of viewing French

Africa policy from the 1990s until today. The first view emphasises that despite official rhetoric indicating a change in French Africa policy, it has indeed continued as before, following the policy of *Françafrique*². A second school believes that French Africa policy has revealed a myriad of contradictory trends, whilst a third group acknowledge a change in policy during this period; from the traditional bilateral strategies between France and former colonies towards a more “multilateral approach with more focus on human rights and democracy” (Hansen 2009:175³).

These conflicting perspectives constitute a suitable backdrop for the present thesis, which investigates French Africa policy from 1981 to 2009. The purpose of the analysis is twofold. First, I wish to investigate whether there have been changes in French Africa policy, and second, and more importantly, I will look at two variables in particular: changes in the international structure and personal relationships among French and African leaders. Through this study, I wish to assess whether these two variables can provide an explanation of how French Africa policy has evolved over time.

France’s role in the international system has been affected by several grand changes during this time. First, the period has seen the end of the Cold War. Globally, this was marked by calls to focus on good governance and human rights in policies towards the developing world, rather than the hitherto strategic focus on the ideological West versus Soviet system. Second, with the last decade’s emergence of China in Africa, it can be argued that a competitive element has been created that may influence French foreign policy. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of China on the African continent constitute two of the more important structural changes in the international system, and will therefore be central to this analysis.

French presidents have what is called a *domaine réservé*, a reserved domain, in foreign policy. Foreign policy is seen as a president’s prerogative; meaning that presidents to a

² The term *Françafrique* will be thoroughly defined in chapter three, but it now refers negatively to the close relationship between France and Africa, and the lack of distinction between public and private (Hansen 2009:180).

³ This quote, and all other quotes hereafter originally written in Norwegian or French, is this author’s own translation (this includes quotes from the interviews).

large extent have control over this sphere, which by nature includes French Africa policy (Knapp and Wright 2001:105). Therefore, it is of interest to see what has actually happened in this policy during the leadership of the three previous presidents, and investigate whether French Africa policy has indeed changed from the traditional *Françafrique* to a new foreign policy approach to Africa. Moreover, I seek to explain what role has been played by international structural changes and personal relationships in affecting these potential changes.

1.2 Scope and Research Question

1.2.1 Narrowing Down the Scope

Figure 1.1 gives an overview over former French colonies as well as French military bases and operations in Africa. This study will focus on French policy towards the former colonies in the francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, but include other francophone countries that have played an important role in French Africa policy, either by providing security, prestige or material gain, or by being important in instigating changes in French policy. I will therefore, for instance, include Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), despite both being former Belgian colonies.



Figure 1.1 Former French colonies/territories and military bases and operations (The Economist 2009).⁴

My argument rests mainly on examples from two countries: Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon. In addition, I will to a lesser extent use illustrations from Chad and Rwanda to show the breadth of French policy. This does not mean that I will not draw upon cases from other countries where needed. The empirical delimitation is mainly due to the scope of this paper, but also to maintain focus in the analysis. Chapter four on methodology will account more in detail for this choice.

With regards to the scope in time, I will limit my analysis to the period of François Mitterrand's election to President in 1981 until the end of 2009. I will start with the presidency of Mitterrand because he was the first socialist president in the Fifth Republic, and people in Africa expected something of a break from the Africa policy of his predecessors (Whiteman 1983:329). Mitterrand's presidency runs through the

⁴ This map is of June 2009, and France has since (February 2010) decided to close the military base in Dakar, Senegal.

period of the end of the Cold War into an era where new priorities became significant in foreign policy. Chirac inherited this post-Cold War context, and was perceived as taking a particular interest in the African continent. Finally, Nicolas Sarkozy advocated for a change in French Africa policy before coming to power. In an essay in *Politique Africaine* during his campaign, he outlined how he believed French Africa policy should be formulated after his election: focusing firstly on “ensuring the security of France and French citizens, and then the security of French friends and allies” (Sarkozy 2007a:149). Secondly, on promoting human rights internationally, and thirdly “advocating French economic and commercial interests” in Africa (Sarkozy 2007a:150, quote from 152). To achieve these objectives, Sarkozy emphasised multilateralisation, and increased transparency in Franco-African relations; “ridding ourselves of the networks of another time” (Sarkozy 2007a:152). I will limit the analysis to December 2009, taking full account of the fact that President Sarkozy has been in power for less than three years.

1.2.2 Research Question

Mitterrand, Chirac, and Sarkozy all came to power with expectations, generated by others or themselves, that French Africa policy would change (Gounin 2010 [interview]). Meanwhile, the context within which France conducts its policy has changed during the three presidencies, and since Mitterrand came to power during the Cold War. At that time, Africa was one of the arenas where France could strengthen the image of France as a major power. From decolonisation onwards, France used its influence in the former French colonies to create the idea of France “as a champion of Third World countries” (Staniland 1987:57). In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain, however, the major powers began to lose interest in Africa, as the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the U.S. now had diminished (Perlez 1992). Events like the Rwanda genocide only contributed to France no longer being seen as “a neutral broker in African conflicts”, and reduced its legitimacy when dealing with Africa (quote from Hansen 2009:184). Over the last decade, “a new scramble for Africa” has begun with Chinese investments in Africa (Southall and Melber 2009).

France therefore now faced competition from other countries when operating in Africa. However, personal relationships between French and African leaders have continued to play an important role, although these are weakening as the old generation of leadership passes away (Hansen 2009).

Overall, developments in the international context, as well as in the personal relationships between French and African leaders, are thus possible explanations of French Africa policy since 1981. The research question will be as follows:

To what extent can international structural changes and personal relationships between French and African leaders explain the evolution of French Africa policy from 1981 until today?

It is important to note that these two factors, changes in the international system and personal relationships, will not be studied in equal detail. The focus will be on the changes in the international system, and how these have affected French Africa policy. However, personal relationships can add significant explanatory power, partly in mediating between changes in the international system and policy change, partly in operating as a cause on its own. The research question thus focuses on the evolution in French Africa policy, and to what extent the independent variables can explain the developments on the dependent variable, as illustrated in figure 1.2 below.

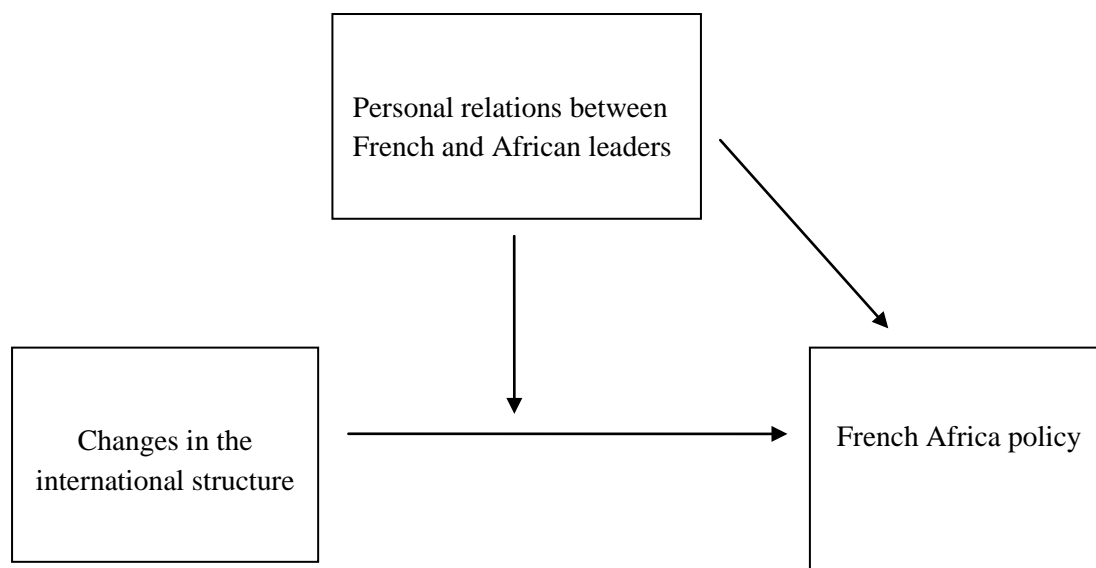


Figure 1.2 The causal relationship between the two independent and the dependent variables.

The elements included in the research question require a proper definition. With structural changes, I refer to changes affecting the balance of power between states. The changes I will focus on are the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China as a global power with an increasingly important presence in Africa. Both these developments have changed the power balance within the international system, and should therefore, according to the model, have caused changes in French Africa policy. By personal relationships between French and African leaders, I refer to the often very close bonds between leaders in Africa and French presidents. As one of my interviewees said; “since Félix Houphouët-Boigny used to be a key political figure of the 4th Republic, he was regarded as French” (Gounin 2010 [interview]). The first African leaders were educated in France, and some even served in the French army. For instance, Togo’s former president Gnassingbé Eyadéma fought under Jacques Chirac in the war of independence in Algeria (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]). The close relationships between French and African leaders are therefore an intrinsic factor when considering French Africa policy.

Lastly, the dependent variable ‘French Africa policy’ must be explained. The background chapter will show how French Africa policy came to be known as ‘*La Françafrique*’, a term used as a connotation of the close ties between France and Africa, but that now has attracted a more negative meaning (Hansen 2009:179-180). Changes in French Africa policy refer to developments in the Franco-African relations, especially in regard to development and military policy. The developments in French aid may show how, if so, French priorities have evolved with regards to the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China. In order to do this, I will for instance analyse speeches, and see how well the French rhetoric fits French policy, that is, whether changes that were announced were actually followed through. Lastly, military policy is an important aspect because France has previously been known for its willingness to intervene in Africa. It is therefore relevant to see whether this willingness has changed in response to the shifts in the international system. The reason why I choose to analyse these two areas is that these are core expressions of French Africa policy, in that development and security have been essential areas of cooperation in Franco-

African relations. Furthermore, solely focusing on these two areas allows for a more in-depth and thorough study, than if I also chose to include other policy domains.

The theoretical approaches are chosen because of the perceived importance of the two independent variables, namely changes in the international system and personal relationships. In order to analyse these two variables, I will use two theoretical perspectives that each touch upon one of the two elements in the question. The changes in the international system will be analysed through the theoretical perspective of structural realism, or neorealism⁵. This is because the theory focuses on the system level, but also because the realist tradition has some core assumptions I wish to analyse whether coincide with French interests in Africa. One of these assumptions is that states are driven by their pursuit of power, and securing their own survival, when conducting foreign policy (Mearsheimer 2007:72,74). Next, the close personal relationships between African and French leaders will be analysed employing the theory of political clientelism, or neopatrimonialism. This theory will be employed because it touches upon one of the main issues within Franco-African relations, the lack of a distinction between “private roles and public positions” (Hansen 2009:180). Both theoretical approaches are used to structure the empirical analysis. The study is thus interpretative, rather than testing the theory, it aims to shed light on key developments in French Africa policy, by employing neorealist and neo-patrimonial theory as “conceptual lenses” (Allison 1996:689).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter two will give an overview over the main theoretical concepts that I will be using in this study: first, the basic concepts of realism, and thereafter structural realism and neopatrimonial theory. Chapter three will follow with an introduction of French Africa policy, and give a historical background to explain the policy in its context. Chapter four will, more in-depth, explain the methodological approach in this thesis, and the constraints that have been met during the writing process.

⁵ These two terms will be interchanged throughout this thesis.

Chapter five and six will analyse French Africa policy the past thirty years. In chapter five, I will begin by presenting what I argue are the main changes in the international system, namely the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China as a main actor on the African continent. This chapter will be divided in two parts focusing on each of these changes, and employ neorealist theory to analyse the development and military policy areas. Chapter six will then add to the explanatory power of structural realism, by analysing the importance of personal relationships between French and African leaders, and how these relations have affected the influence of the changes in the international system on French Africa policy. Finally, the last chapter will contain the conclusion.

2 Theoretical Approaches

2.1 Important Concepts Within Realism

In order to analyse whether changes in the international system have been important for the evolution of French Africa policy, I will use a mixture of realist concepts and a theoretic strand within the realist tradition called structural realism.

According to Lynn-Jones and Miller, there are within the realist tradition, six assumptions that can describe the nature of the international system (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995:ix). First of all, “states are the most important actors” in the international system, and realists concentrate on explicating the actions of states (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995:ix). Then they see the international system as anarchic; there is no central government above state-level. This entails that they themselves must preserve their own interests. Third, they see the key goal of states as “maximising either their power or their security” (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995:ix). The fourth assumption realists normally make is that they see states attaining these two objectives through rational policies. Fifth, realists usually find that “states will tend to rely on the threat or use of military force to secure their objectives in international politics” (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995:ix-x). And finally, “most realists believe that aspects of the international system—especially the distribution of power among states—are the most important causes of the basic patterns of international politics and foreign policy”, and they thus focus on international factors in their analyses (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995:x).

For realists, interest is “defined in terms of power” (Morgenthau 2006:5). Moreover, these interests can more specifically be defined as “survival, security, power and relative capabilities” (Holsti 2005:59). Finally, because threats to the survival of the state are defined by the international system, the behaviour of states in response to for instance threats are seen as defined by external political forces (Holsti 2005:59).

2.2 Structural Realism - “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must”⁶

Structural realism, or neorealism, emerged as an attempt to give a “scientific explanation of the international political system” (Jackson & Sørensen 2003:84). Neorealist theory goes further than realism in defining international politics as a “system with a precisely defined structure” (Waltz 1990:30). Kenneth Waltz is one of the main proponents of this strand of realism, and in his *Theory of International Politics*, he outlines what this theory entails. Firstly, defining international politics in terms of a system, he believes that “[i]nternational systems are decentralized and anarchic” (Waltz 1996a:307). The system is created by several units, in this case states, acting together with their own interest in mind (Waltz 1996a:309). It is the structure of this system that is central to neorealist thought. The structure defines a country’s policy, and “compel them to act in certain ways” (Jackson and Sørensen 2003:84). Therefore, when using this theory to analyse the evolution of French Africa policy, I will see whether, and how, the changes in structure have affected this policy. I will analyse two main changes in the international structure, namely the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China on the African continent. Both these changes will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

According to the principles of the theory, states will pursue the same policy when facing the same situation. The states that act in accordance with the changing structure, will be more likely to “rise to the top and are likelier to stay there. The game one has to win is defined by the structure that determines the kind of player who is likely to prosper” (Waltz 1996a:310). One can define structures “according to the principle by which a system is ordered...[and] by the distribution of capabilities across units” (Waltz 1996a:310)⁷. This entails that the amount of power each state has relative to other states forms part of how the structure is defined. In this anarchic system, these states must themselves create the capital needed for their own survival, and therefore a

⁶ Thucydides cited in Rose 1998:146.

⁷ I have not included the second part of the definition of international structures, because it is not relevant to an anarchic system, which is how Waltz describes the current international system (Waltz 1996:310).

guiding notion is that of “self-help”, namely, first looking to preserve one’s own existence (Waltz 1996a:310). Regarding French policy, one can assume that its former empire is central to the concept of the French great power. Although this type of relation is often based on sentiments, it becomes rational in the larger perspective of maintaining a strong French position in international politics.

States act according to the structures in the system to ensure their own survival, which is the main motive for all states. However, beyond this, the goals of states can vary dramatically; from the most expansionist of states to others more prone to simply aim for continued existence without expansionist policies. The security of states in this system is not guaranteed, and states therefore respond accordingly to guarantee their own survival (Waltz 1996a:309).

Moreover, in the neorealist framework “states are rational actors” (Mearsheimer 2007:74). And in this structure, the structural limitations show that any leader of any state will use the same methods to conduct policy in the same situation, regardless of who the leader is or which state it is (Waltz 1996a:310). This is particularly interesting in this study, because Mitterrand was not from the same political party as his two successors. The disregard of political leaders’ motives and interests rests on the fact that Waltz believes that states and their leaders will conduct foreign policy guided by their national interests “more or less automatically” (Jackson and Sørensen 2003:88). This is interesting also with regards to neopatrimonial theory, which will be introduced later in this chapter. This might entail that if it is in the national interest to maintain personal relations between French and African leaders, French leaders will continue pursuing these bonds, regardless of which political party the president adheres to. The theory aims to show how “the interaction of states generates a structure that then constrains them from taking certain actions and disposes them toward taking others” (Waltz 1996b:54). Balance-of-power theory, Waltz holds, should explain which consequences this has (Waltz 1996a:310). Balance-of-power theory contains certain postulations about states:

“[t]hey are unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination. States, or those who act for them, try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view. Those means fall into two categories: internal efforts (moves to increase economic capability, to increase military strength, to develop clever strategies) and external efforts (moves to strengthen and enlarge one’s own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one)...To the assumptions of the theory we then add the condition for its operation: that two or more states coexist in a self-help system, one with no superior agent to come to the aid of states that may be weakening or to deny to any of them the use of whatever instruments they think will serve their purposes” (Waltz 1996a:311).⁸

These assumptions about states are the basis of the balance-of-power theory (Waltz 1996a:311). This thesis will employ Waltz’ definition of external efforts. The theory has been criticised for having faulty assumptions. Waltz argues, however, that assumptions are not supposed to be true or false, but rather supposed to be assumptions, and these are important for theory building (Waltz 1996a:311). Another critique is particularly relevant for this thesis. Waltz here describes how this theory is criticised for not being able to “explain the particular policies of states” (Waltz 1996a:312). To this, Waltz writes that his theory was never supposed to answer “questions about matters at a different level of generality” (Waltz 1996a:312).

Waltz develops this argument even further in his article *International Politics is Not Foreign Policy* (Waltz 1996b). Here, he focuses on how the theory is a theory of international politics rather than a theory of foreign policy, because of the differences in level of analysis. As Waltz writes: “[t]he theory explains why states similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences. The explanation of states’ behavior is found at the international, and not at the national, level” (Waltz 1996b:54). One of the problems with using structural realism to analyse foreign policy is that the theory only shows how conditions external to states form their conduct, but does not take into account the potential domestic powers that may influence a state’s behaviour (Waltz 1996b:57). The theory is, therefore, “[u]nder most circumstances”... “not sufficient,

⁸ “A self-help system is one in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer. Fears of such unwanted consequences stimulates states to behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power” (Waltz 1996a:310).

and cannot be made sufficient, for the making of unambiguous foreign-policy predictions” (Waltz 1996b:57).

Colin Elman, on the other hand, has studied neorealist theory and found that it can, in fact, be used to explain foreign policy, simply by meeting the critique. For instance, if domestic variables are considered important, one can include them. Are they on the other hand not deemed relevant by the researcher, they can be omitted (Elman 1996). Elman receives support for his view by another neorealist, John Mearsheimer. Mearsheimer argues that the strand of neorealist thought that his school represents, namely offensive realism, does not need to be complemented by a “distinct theory of foreign policy” (Mearsheimer 2007:77). This is because offensive realists often “rely exclusively on structural arguments to explain international politics”, and that is, according to Mearsheimer, sufficient (Mearsheimer 2007:77).

2.2.1 Offensive and Defensive Neorealist Theory

I will employ both defensive and offensive structural realism in this thesis. Kenneth Waltz is the main proponent for defensive structural realism, whilst John Mearsheimer advocates offensive structural realism. The main difference between these two strands is that defensive structural realists believe that states should not attempt to maximise their own power, because “the system will punish them if they attempt to gain too much power” (Mearsheimer 2007:72). Offensive realists disagree and argue that states should pursue as much power as possible, because this is the best way to guarantee the state’s survival. For structural realists then, gaining power is seen as the best way of ensuring survival, which is the ultimate goal for states (Mearsheimer 2007:72).

According to offensive realism, states go to war for other reasons than merely security, and “[i]deology or economic considerations are sometimes paramount” (Mearsheimer 2007:78). This is in full accordance with neorealist principles, as long as the conflict does not jeopardize the aggressor state’s “position in the balance of power” (Mearsheimer 2007:78). This argument is relevant to the study of French Africa policy, especially with regards to French interventions in Africa. It is more likely that

it is the French wish of increasing its sphere of influence or preserving its economic interests that form the base in its Africa policy, rather than merely security. Nevertheless, the security aspect is also of importance because France sees a stable Africa in connection with a secure France (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). Interventions to prevent conflict in Africa may therefore be viewed as part of this strategy.

One of Waltz' arguments against using neorealism to study foreign policy is that there are internal factors that need to be considered, and neorealism does not include these in its analysis (Waltz 1996b:57). Because of the scope of this dissertation, I will not be able to simultaneously analyse internal events in France. Furthermore, Waltz does not see the motives and interests of state leaders as important (Waltz 1996a:310). I will, however, argue that the interests of French presidents are in fact of importance when analysing French Africa policy, due to the close personal relationships both President Mitterrand and President Chirac have had to African leaders during their presidential period. Since structural realism does not cover this, I will here justify analysing the personal relationships by drawing on elements from classical realist theory, where according to Jackson and Sørensen (2003:84), "state leaders and their subjective valuations of international relations are at the center of attention". I will analyse French interests through the presidents' close, personal relationships with African leaders, and to do so, I will employ neopatrimonial theory.

2.3 Neopatrimonialism and the Close Relationships between French and African Leaders

The concept of neopatrimonialism was developed from Max Weber's notion of "patrimonial authority" (Hansen 2003:203). This was "a form of traditional authority characterised by personal rule acknowledged by tradition and personal loyalty", where the interests of the rulers were more significant than "codified law" (Hansen 2003:203). Jean-François Médard has been one of the main contributors to the development of neopatrimonial theory. He defines it as the lack of a clear division "between the public and the private domain" (Médard 1996:80). This indicates a

“confusion” amidst the two spheres (Médard 1996:80). Further, this confusion “is precisely the main characteristic of African political life” (Médard 1996:80).

Not only is this a main characteristic of African political life, but also after decolonisation it became one of the key traits of the Franco-African relations. In most of the former colonies, a francophone elite came to power after independence, and usually these owed their influential standing in the society to the French. Ending the close relations to the French was therefore not desirable (Chafer 2005:8). According to Médard this led to “Franco-African relations ...[being] only loosely institutionalized, being based on a web of ‘friendships’ that bind a section of the French governing class and that of certain African countries” (Médard 1997:22). These continuing close links are based on the “patrimonialization of Franco-African relations” (Médard 1997:23).

When analysing the modern African state, Médard argues for differentiating between the modern and the traditional state, by employing the idea of neopatrimonialism (Médard 1996:82). The advantage of this, he argues, is to see clearly the changes between the traditional and the modern state (Médard 1996:83). The modern African state is one where “the bureaucratization and the patrimonialization proceeded together”, which resulted in a combination of the two (Médard 1996:84). In this regard, the use of “the prefix “neo”” clarifies that this is not an ideal type, but rather refers to a hybrid (Médard 1996:84). With this at mind, neopatrimonialism must be defined in a more refined way than patrimonialism, and not only include the confusion of private and public areas, but further the “non respect of this distinction [between private and public] when it is made” (Médard 1996:85). In his article *Within the Family*, Médard classifies the Franco-African relationship as patrimonial⁹ (Médard 1997:23). Hansen writes that the term *Françafrique* now has become an expression to signify the blurring of the distinction between public and private in Franco-African relations (Hansen 2009:180). This is due to the *réseaux*, or networks, that have traditionally been influential in French Africa policy, and of the involvement of

⁹ Médard seems to interchange the two terms, neopatrimonial and patrimonial. Hereafter, I will refer to Franco-African relations as neopatrimonial, precisely because I analyse the relations between modern African states and France.

businessmen in French Africa policy (Médard 1997:28-30)¹⁰.

According to Médard, this absence of separation between the two domains leads to two occurrences. Firstly, this definition means that power is personalised, that is, “private means personal” (Médard 1996:86). This signifies that there is no division of the position and the person who occupies it (Médard 1996:86). This affects political relations, and as Médard writes, these “are personalized” (Médard 1996:86). With regards to the leaders of these states, they behave in the same manner. The leader and his followers take control over the state and its resources, and it is due to his “personal network which infiltrates the party and the state apparatus, that he can control the state, extract resources for his own use and maintain his own network” (Médard 1996:86). Secondly, this means that there is no division between the political and economic (Médard 1996:86). A key way of obtaining affluence is through the state, while at the same time the more capital you have, the more “access to power” you will get (Médard 1996:87). This also makes these positions much more sought after than in Western democracies, Médard writes, because one does not only get power, “but direct access to wealth” (Médard 1996:87).

The clientele relationship is central to neopatrimonialism. This can be defined as “a relation of personal dependency based on an reciprocal exchange of favors between two persons, the patron and the client who control unequal resources” (Médard (1976) cited in Médard 1996:88¹¹). *Françafrique* is according to Médard, based on exactly these types of ties, namely patron-client relations (Médard 2005:39). France serves as the patron, while the African countries are the clients (Médard 2005:39). Nevertheless, clients are more than mere puppets, and “can influence its patron”, as the role played by the Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny in delaying the devaluation of the CFA franc will illustrate in chapter six (Médard 2005:39, Dokken 2000:234).

¹⁰ These networks will be more fully introduced in chapter six.

¹¹ In the article, Médard has written “an reciprocal exchange”, and therefore I did not change this when citing his article.

In neopatrimonial theory, much rests on the “personal norms and personality of the leader” (Médard 1996:85). The neorealist framework does not consider personal behaviour or relationships, but in French Africa policy, such relations have been important. Including this aspect will ensure that I cover French Africa policy more in-depth, and will give the analysis more explanatory power.

3 Background

3.1 French Colonial History, Presidential Power and Cohabitation

This chapter will provide an introduction to Franco-African relations, as well as the French presidential system. This background is imperative to the understanding of the unique and special relationship that France has to its former colonies and is part of explaining French foreign policy choices over the last three decades. It is further a necessary backdrop to understand why I chose to focus on the respective theoretical approaches with regards to the independent variables. Firstly, it will show how French policy was marked by continuity from decolonisation until the fall of the Iron Curtain, and secondly, it will show how the policy was shaped by the close relations between French and African leaders.

3.1.1 “Without Africa, there will be no French history in the 21st Century”¹²

The above quote comes from a book that François Mitterrand published in 1957, after having served as Minister of France overseas from 1950-51 (Dozon 2003:242). During the colonial rule of West Africa France’s main policy was that of assimilation, it wanted West Africa to “become a part of France” (Wooten). Like the title of Mitterrand’s minister position indicates, its colonies in Africa were merely seen as a continuation of France overseas. Schools had French textbooks, and classes were taught in French (Simensen 2004:269). Some selected Africans with higher education and income could become French citizens, and could even be on the ballot to the National Assembly in France (Simensen 2004:240). However, it was mostly in Senegal that African people were able to participate in French national affairs, whilst most West Africans had, at the beginning of the 20th century, become “subjects” rather than citizens (quote from Wooten, Davidson 1991:48). Jean-Pierre Dozon writes about

¹² From the conclusion in François Mitterrand’s book *Présence française et abandon* from 1957, cited in Dozon 2003:243, author’s own translation from French.

this paradox of how the French viewed Africans either as subjects, or citizens; that is brothers and subjects (*frères et sujets*). At the same time as Africans were permitted to obtain a French citizenship and be considered as brothers, the French embarked upon an expansionist policy, and in doing so treated the African inhabitants increasingly as subjects (Dozon 2003:123-124).

The Brazzaville-conference in January 1944 promised more rights to African citizens, but rejected independence for the French colonies. However, few of the promises of expanded rights, as stipulated in the Brazzaville declaration, were honoured, which increased the resistance, especially among educated Africans, against the French colonial power (Hansen 2009:177). In 1939, France had created the Franc Zone, making a common currency (the CFA franc) for fifteen of its former colonies, tied first to the French franc, and from 2002 to the euro (BBC 2002, BBC 1999). This ensured that France could keep its former colonies close through monetary measures. According to Staniland, the former colonies were “required to transfer at least 65 *per cent* of their foreign exchange earnings to the Bank of France” (Cunha cited in Staniland 1987:54).

After President de Gaulle came to power in 1958, he realised that more transfer of power to the African colonies was inevitable (Simensen 2004:306). He gave the colonies a choice, either full independence or joining the French Community with self-governance, but leaving France in control over foreign affairs and taxation. All countries in the Community would receive economic aid. However, choosing independence would mean losing this opportunity (Lowe 1997:445). Guinea was the only colony that immediately voted for full independence (Simensen 2004:306). The other states were inspired by Guinea’s no-vote, and soon stronger calls for independence came. During 1960 the Sub-Saharan African colonies regained their sovereignty from France. However, they did not become completely independent, as Lowe writes; “all the states except Guinea found that France still influenced their economic and foreign policies, and any independent action was almost out of the question” (Lowe 1997:445).

From the time of de Gaulle, there has been a special advisor on African affairs in the Élysée. De Gaulle created this position because, according to Whiteman, he wanted to “indicate the personal interest and attention paid by the President to Africa, and the belief that many aspects of policy in relation to Africa were best regulated by personal contact, on a kind of extended family principle” (Whiteman 1983:336). During the presidencies of Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, this position was held by Jacques Foccart, the *Monsieur Afrique* (Whiteman 1983:336, Hansen 2009:179). These special advisors have their own networks, and Jacques Foccart is seen as the first leader of the network called the *cellule africaine*; the African Cell¹³ (Knapp and Wright 2001:105, Chataigner 2006:247).

3.1.2 “Partir pour mieux rester”? La Françafrique or La France à Fric?

After the period of the decolonisation, France continued to have a close relationship with Africa (Smith 2010). Francophone elites came to power, and often continued the close relations to their former colonial power to avoid risking their own position, ruling over weak countries with poorly developed armed forces (Chafer 2005:8). France soon formulated the notion of *coopération*, a concept that was “linked to the spread of French influence across the world”, both in terms of language, culture and “French grandeur” (Chafer 2005:10). Additionally, there was an acknowledgment that the colonial period was over, and that France now should support its former colonies advance by a partnership “for their mutual benefit” (Chafer 2005:10).

Albeit the concept of *coopération*, French Africa policy remained closely knit to the idea of France as a major power. During the Cold War, France used its influence and position to promote itself as an advocate for “Third World countries” (Staniland 1987:57). In 1973, President Georges Pompidou created a Franco-African summit, to be held alternately in France and in Africa biannually (Bernard et al 2005). Now, this summit is held practically annually (Hansen 2009:187). It has also become an event with a much broader scope; at the beginning, there was only a handful of leaders from

¹³ The structure of the African Cell will be explained in more detail in chapter six.

the former French colonies as well as the French president, Georges Pompidou, in attendance¹⁴. At the last meeting in Cannes in 2007, 49 African leaders participated, and the then president of the EU, the German chancellor Angela Merkel, was invited as a keynote speaker (Hansen 2009:187-188).

After Georges Pompidou died, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing came to power in May 1974. He was criticised by both the left and the right in France for his Africa policy. The left saw him as a president supporting dictators; taking no interest in promoting human rights on the continent. The right on the other hand disapproved of his policy in general, and believed that Presidents de Gaulle and Pompidou had a “better handling of Africa” (Whiteman 1983:330).

From Presidents de Gaulle to Mitterrand, Africa by far remained an important region for France. The Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny wished to sum up how the French and the Africans were intimately connected, both in terms of politics and economics, and coined the term *Françafrique* as an expression of this close relationship (Gounin 2009:27). This term was further meant to signalise the shared vision African and French politicians held for the future of Franco-African relations (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]). However, in the mid-1990s the expression was used by the academic François-Xavier Verschave to express “the shadow side” of the relations between France and its former colonies, in his book entitled *Françafrique- The longest scandal of the Republic* (quote from Gounin 2009:27, Verschave 1999¹⁵). Verschave defines *Françafrique* as “the secret criminality in the upper echelons of French politics and economy, where a kind of underground Republic is hidden from view” (Verschave 2006). *Françafrique* is further a play on words, as it can be understood as *France à fric*, fric signifying cash, because as Verschave says:

“[o]ver the course of four decades, hundreds of thousands of euros misappropriated from debt, aid, oil, cocoa... or drained through French importing monopolies, have financed French political-business

¹⁴ The presidents present in 1973 were Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire), Omar Bongo (Gabon), Sangoulé Lamizana (Upper Volta now Burkina Faso), Hamani Diori (Niger), Jean-Bedel Bokassa (Central African Republic), Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal) in addition to delegations on ministerial level from Congo, Dahomey (now Benin), Mali and Togo (France Diplomatie 1).

¹⁵ The author's translation of the French title *La Françafrique. Le plus long scandale de la République*.

networks (all of them offshoots of the main neo-Gaullist network), shareholders' dividends, the secret services' major operations and mercenary expeditions" (Verschave 2006).

As can be seen from the above, the term no longer has the positive connotation Houphouët-Boigny intended for it. Thus, it is clear that French Africa policy has remained a contentious and debated theme over the last fifty years.

3.1.3 Presidential Power and Foreign Policy-Making in France

The establishment of the Fifth Republic gave much broader authority to the president, and from the time of President de Gaulle, French presidents have had a tradition of a *domaine réservé*. The exclusiveness of this control is by tradition rather than through the constitution (Knapp and Wright 2001:105). Although French presidents have, since de Gaulle, considered foreign policy as their prerogative, formally the prime minister "also has constitutional prerogatives in this area" (Knapp and Wright 2001:117). However, write Knapp and Wright, disputes between the president and prime minister do not occur often, as both parties can be negatively affected by such disputes.

"The reasons", they write, "are threefold. First, there are clear disincentives to public bickering over foreign and defence policy: loss of credibility abroad and of respect among opinion at home ... Second, the measure of consensus over foreign and defence policy in France is considerable Third, the widespread acceptance, within the defence and foreign affairs policy communities, that 'France should speak with one voice' at all times has generated institutional mechanisms by which initiatives can be co-ordinated and conflicts defused" (Knapp and Wright 2001:117).

In the next part, I will briefly give an introduction to the three presidencies under study. I will, however, not go into the details of each presidency because this will be covered in chapter five and six.

3.2 The Period of François Mitterrand

President François Mitterrand, of the Socialist Party, was elected in May 1981, which resulted, in Kaye Whiteman's words, in a "tremendous outburst of euphoria" in France (Whiteman 1983:329). There were also signs of approval in Africa. In the towns of Bangui and Kinshasa, in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of

Congo, people were “rejoicing in the streets” (Whiteman 1983:329). According to Whiteman, this was to a degree an indication of the need for a new Africa policy after President d’Estaing, but it was moreover hope that the coming to power of a Socialist party would advance conditions for the people in these African countries (Whiteman 1983:329).

In May 1982 on his first presidential visit to Africa, it became clear that Mitterrand would not exclusively focus on human rights as he had previously claimed. His focus would rather be maintaining good relations with the African *pré carré*, or ‘backyard’. Mitterrand further said that Franco-African relations “were good” as they were, and that there was “no need for a change” (Mitterrand cited in Langellier 1995). The Africa advisor Guy Penne soon became the “voice of the status quo” (Whiteman 1983:337).

Even with this proclamation of change, there were nevertheless, signals of change with the La Baule speech in 1990, which introduced the concept of political conditionality in development policy (Hansen 2009:182). This new concept, and President Mitterrand’s overall policies for his presidential period, will be analysed in detail in the following chapters.

3.3 Jacques Chirac- *l’Africain*¹⁶

In Dakar in 1990 Jacques Chirac, the then mayor of Paris and now former President of the French Republic, stated that “Africa was not ripe for democracy” (Chirac cited in Médard 2005:50). After he was elected in 1995, it seemed that Franco-African relations would continue as before. Chirac even brought back the famous *Monsieur Afrique*, Jacques Foccart. Foccart accompanied him on his first trip to Africa as president, and remained close to Chirac until his death in 1997 (Claude 2007:907). Furthermore, despite the international criticism of the French role in the Rwanda crisis, President Chirac refused to invite the new Tutsi president of Rwanda to his first Franco-African summit. Rather, Chirac chose to start the conference with a moment of

¹⁶ President Jacques Chirac is known as the African (Claude 2007).

silence to honour the memory of the late president Habyarimana, rather than to the victims of the genocide (Meredith 2006:525-526). These signs were an indication that Chirac would follow the same policy as preceding presidents.

According to Gérard Claude, Chirac did not wish to impose democracy on African countries, nor did he wish to schedule reform, despite the renewed focus on democracy internationally (Claude 2007:912). For instance, Chirac cancelled the Gabonese debt to France, despite the lack of democratisation in the country (Claude 2007:913). Omar Bongo, the Gabonese president, had been in power over the past 40 years before he died in June 2009 (BBC 2009c). That the French cancelled debts regardless of democratic reform shows the importance of the former colonies to France.

Nevertheless, during Chirac's second term from 2002 until 2007¹⁷, there was a tendency towards directing policies toward countries outside the *pré carré*, both for strategic and economic reasons. At the end of Chirac's period, for instance, Nigeria was the largest African supplier of oil to France, and France expanded its relations with South Africa and Angola (Claude 2007:916). Likewise, there was a propensity to multilateralise relations, through for instance, the EU or the UN (Bernard et al 2005).

3.4 The Presidency of Sarkozy

Before he was elected president, Nicolas Sarkozy advocated for a change in French Africa policy during a speech in Benin, in 2006. He argued that there was a need for a new relation between France and Africa (Sarkozy 2006). However, after he came to power he has been heavily criticised, among others, for saying that "[t]he tragedy of Africa is that the African has never really entered into history" in Dakar in 2007 (Sarkozy 2007b). Nevertheless, President Sarkozy has shown willingness to change Franco-African relations. France still has defence agreements with several African countries, allowing them to intervene if the country has internal or external threats (Staniland 1987:55, Servenay 2007). Sarkozy expressed, while in South Africa in 2008, that the time had come to renegotiate these agreements (Bernard 2009). In

¹⁷ In 2000, the French voted yes to a reform limiting the presidential period to five years, from the previous seven year term (BBC 2000).

August 2009, he specified this more clearly by stating that this should happen by the end of 2009, and several of these have now (beginning of 2010) been renegotiated (Le Point 2009, Marechaux 2010 [interview]).

Under President Sarkozy, France has begun to expand its Africa policy, and to continue President Jacques Chirac's policy of looking outside the *pré carré*. France has carried on channelling its Africa policy through the EU, signalling a multilateral approach. The French training programme for African forces, RECAMP, has, for instance, been transformed to EURO CAMP; a European Union programme (French Embassy UK 2008). This shows French Africa policy under Sarkozy reaching beyond its former colonies, and indicates the continuance of a multilateralisation of policy.

The following chapters will discuss these new developments in French Africa policy in more detail through a neorealist and a neopatrimonial framework.

4 Methodological Approach

4.1 Research Design- The Case Study Approach

To limit the scope of the analysis, and to make the study more coherent, I have chosen to mainly focus on examples from two countries. Nevertheless, I do draw upon illustrations from other countries where this is deemed relevant. The two countries that are singled out cover fundamental aspects of the Franco-African relations. Gabon is a country with large occurrences of natural resources, and its former leader enjoyed close relationships with French presidents, as mentioned in the introduction. Examples from Côte d'Ivoire show sides of the military relationship between France and its former colonies, as the French Army has an ongoing operation in the country (BBC 2010a). Moreover, former president Félix Houphouët-Boigny had personal friendships with several French presidents until his death in 1993 (Hansen 2009:179). To a lesser degree, I will use examples from Chad and Rwanda. Both these two countries serve as examples of French interventions, and furthermore the personal relations between French and African leaders. It is however important to emphasise that this is a study of French Africa policy in general, and not a comparative study of French policy towards each of the countries. These countries will rather be used to substantiate French Africa policy in the period under study.

The causal relationship in this study is as indicated in the introduction, the changes in the international structure are believed to be the main explanatory variable, with personal relationships mediating in between and partly operating as a cause on its own. Further, it is important to explicitly state the expectations of how changes in the two independent variables will affect French Africa policy. First, changes in the international structure are expected to lead to several results. For instance with the end of the Cold War, one can expect that France would follow the international trend of focusing on democracy and conditionality in their approach to Africa. Following this expectation, one can further suppose that France would to a lesser degree support non-democratic African leaders, both in terms of development assistance and military

interventions on their behalf. Furthermore, one can assume that once the threat of the communist expansion vanished, France would release its 'hold' on the region, and intervene less in African countries. With the emergence of China, one may expect a similar policy to that of the Cold War years; that is, similar in the sense that France would now attempt to prevent the Chinese from gathering strength in francophone Africa. Due to the importance of Africa to France, France may wish to contain Chinese influence. This could be done by for instance increasing development assistance, to maintain influence in the former colonies. Moreover, the French may use other methods such as creating partnerships with the Chinese to prevent the African leaders from gaining leverage vis-à-vis the French. Likewise, France might use military or economic means, in forms of support and assistance, to sustain regimes that favour the French over the Chinese. However, to what extent these changes can be expected depends on the depth of the Chinese involvement in Africa, and the extent to which the French view the Chinese as a threat to their interests in Africa. In this respect, the end of the Cold War can be said to have been a more profound change internationally than the emergence of China.

In the case of the personal relationships, changes in these may affect how the international structural changes have influenced French Africa policy. For instance, if the French and African presidents had close personal relationships, one can assume that the French would be more reluctant to promote democracy and human rights, and be more concerned with supporting their 'friends'. Likewise, if these relations were to change, the French may be more willing to reform French Africa policy. Changes in the personal relationships may make France more inclined towards ending interventions on behalf of African leaders, or end development aid to countries that are not willing to reform according to democratic principles.

According to Arend Lijphart, there are six different types of case studies: atheoretical, interpretative, hypothesis-generating, theory-confirming, theory-infirming and deviant case studies (Lijphart 1971:691). Through this thesis, I aim to explain French Africa policy by using structural realism and neopatrimonial theory. Therefore, this study can be said to be an interpretative case study. It does not set out to test the theory further

than seeing whether or not it can be used to explain the (potential) changes in French Africa policy. Furthermore, it cannot be said to be a theory-testing case, as I did not pick the case in order to test the theory, but rather chose the theory to enlighten the case. This does not necessarily contribute to the development of theory, but can give in-depth information on a particular case (Andersen 2005:68). This is precisely the aim of this study: to gain an understanding of French policy towards Africa in the past three decades, and not to develop theory for other similar relations.

The two countries selected as main illustrations of the relationship were selected because they possess characteristics relevant to the theoretical approaches employed. This implies selecting on the basis of the independent variables, namely cases where the French had strong economic or material interests due to for instance large occurrences of natural resources, or were important in more geopolitical terms (to study through neorealism) or cases where the personal relations were strong (to study through neopatrimonialism). To study the causality depicted in figure 1.2, it is necessary to study cases where there was a possibility of such correlations, in accordance with the use of relevant cases (Mahoney and Goertz 2004:653). Therefore, to study how these relations have affected French Africa policy, and how they have developed over the last three decades, it is necessary to study cases where there were in fact such relations at the beginning of the period under study.

One of the great advantages of the case study is that it allows for an in-depth analysis. However, single-case studies are criticised for not contributing to *representativeness*, defined as “the degree to which causal relationships evidenced by that single unit may be assumed to be true for a larger set of (unstudied) units” (Gerring 2004:348). However, to increase the representativeness of this study, and because it is a study of French Africa policy on the whole, I have used examples from other countries where this was necessary to shed light upon developments in French Africa policy.

Neorealist and neopatrimonial theory are chosen because of their explanatory power when it comes to aspects I consider important in Franco-African relations. As for

instance Daniela Krosalak writes: “[t]he end of the Cold War ... had a significant impact on French policy towards Africa” (Krosalak 2004:61). To fully explain how these two structural changes; namely the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China, influenced French Africa policy, it was necessary to employ a theory that covered the structural changes and moreover, could potentially explain the rationale behind French Africa policy. This will be fully analysed in chapter five. However, as I early on discovered the importance of personal relations, it was further imperative to also look at how these have influenced Franco-African relations. Neopatrimonial theory captures the essence of these relations, as well as the blurring of the distinction between public and private, which have been central in France’s relations to Africa (Médard 1997:23).

4.2 Data Sources

To analyse French Africa policy, I will use several methods of data collection. Triangulation in data collection is one of the advantages with the case study approach, and is often a necessary component when using this approach (Yin 2003:97). I will firstly base my findings on secondary literature: articles, books and newspaper articles on French Africa policy. A potential problem with this is that many of the books on the subject are written by journalists, rather than academics. These tomes often have a negative view on French Africa policy, and some of the important books are written, in the words of one of the authors “in anger” (Verschave 1999). This has made the research more challenging, as it has been necessary to cover a number of different sources to verify which opinions are biased, and which are well-founded critiques. In some cases, it has been difficult to find alternative unbiased sources. It is thus important to be aware of this challenge when using these particular sources. I will also look at official speeches from French leaders. Finding specific policy papers on French Africa policy has been difficult, but several informants advised me that such information, particularly in the case of President Sarkozy, could be found in his speeches. In addition to these written sources, I also conducted interviews with journalists, bureaucrats/diplomats and academic researchers, in both France and

Norway, to find answers to questions not necessarily answered in the literature and to shed more light on disputed or debated issues.

4.3 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews can be divided into three different groups; the informal conversational interview; where nothing is planned in advance but depends on the flow of the conversation, interviewing based on an interview guide; where one has a general idea of the questions, but the way they are posed and their order might vary. And lastly a standardised open-ended interview; where the order of the questions and type of questions are determined beforehand, but the way they are answered remains open (Mikkelsen 2005:171). In this case study, interviews were type two-interviews. That is, they were conducted on the basis of an interview guide, but at the same time the respondents were allowed to talk freely. Furthermore, the order the questions were posed in differed, and probe questions varied from time to time. This method has been criticised because of the risk of unintentionally leaving out important subjects. Another criticism has been that given that the order and wording of the questions differ from each interview, so too can the responses differ, making it more difficult to compare the various responses afterwards (Mikkelsen 2005:171). However, using this semi-structured interview technique “increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed” (Mikkelsen 2005:171). Robert Yin (2003:90) classifies these short interviews that last for about an hour and follow “a certain set of questions” as a “focused interview”. In this case, the interviews I conducted were mostly to, as Yin writes “corroborate certain facts” (Yin 2003:90). This makes the criticism against the poor comparability of the interviews less relevant, as I used the interviews to check facts, get general ideas about French Africa policy or get an idea of official policy from those working with this issue today. With regards to leaving out important topics, I usually started the interview with a very broad question giving the informant the opportunity to focus on the areas he or she deemed the most important. I further, in

most cases, ended the interviews by asking if there was anything the informant would like to add. In total, I conducted ten interviews with informants in Paris and Oslo.

Svein Andersen (2006:279) emphasises the importance of active interviewing. When deciding whom to interview, researchers often decide upon interviewing key informants. These are people who are well informed on a particular subject, and it is therefore very likely that they are resourceful people (Andersen 2006:279). Therefore, they are likely to be active and talkative during the interview. This form of interviewing subsequently requires that the researcher is more active (Andersen 2006:282). If the researcher is more active, it might enable her to gain more analytical control over the situation, which thereby can increase the reliability and validity of the interviews. During the interviews, I used interview guides (see Appendix), but at the same time allowed the conversation to flow freely. This enabled the respondents to talk, and thereby possibly covering several of my questions without knowing it, but at the same time, it allowed me to go back and probe on certain things I was uncertain about, or that I did not think they had covered sufficiently. However, in some situations this could also hinder the flow of the conversation, as they had to go back on something they felt they had already covered, albeit inadvertently. Nevertheless, since I had an interview guide with my questions written down, I was able to ask all the questions I had prepared.

The written interview guide played an important part when I interviewed in French. When interviewing powerful officials working on the issue, there was an added security in having written down the questions beforehand. This meant that if my language skills at any time stopped the conversation, I would have the questions already written down making it easier to return to the planned questions.

4.4 Finding Informants

The chosen respondents can all be said to fall in the category of key informants, as they were researchers, journalists or high standing officials working specifically on, or with, French policy towards Africa. This further allowed for different perspectives on

French Africa policy, as I interviewed people both from France and Norway. The risk of interviewing such key informants is that they can potentially take control of the interview situation, and make the researcher more passive (Ostrander (1995) in Andersen 2006:282).

Finding respondents was both challenging and rewarding. This proved to be the case especially when attempting to interview French bureaucrats and diplomats. At first, I tried to directly contact the different ministries that concern itself with African issues, both the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to see if I could interview any of their Africa specialists. However, although the responses I received were helpful, I was not able to schedule interviews with anyone in either ministry through this approach. Direct contact nevertheless proved a success when contacting the presidential advisors at the Élysée, one of whom agreed to be interviewed. Likewise, enquiries made to the French Embassy in Oslo were not fruitful. However, through the aid of the Norwegian embassy in Paris, I was able to make contacts that helped me attain several interviews with high-standing officials in relevant positions. Some of the informants were attained through contacts, as I was often able to get new contacts, and in some cases new informants, during the interviews.

As previously stated, I interviewed ten respondents in total. Of these, two were journalists, Vibeke Knoop Rachline, a correspondent for Aftenposten, and Emmanuelle Pontié, the deputy manager of Afrique Magazine in Paris¹⁸. I further interviewed two researchers. One was Ketil Fred Hansen, who is based in Oslo and has written several articles on French Africa policy. The other researcher I interviewed was Roland Marchal, a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), based at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche Internationales (CERI) in Paris. He has among others been co-editor of issue number 105 of *Politique Africaine* devoted to the Franco-African relationship, written articles on this subject, and further on the French reaction to the emergence of China. The last six respondents were several high-standing officials currently or previously working with French Africa policy. Remi Marechaux is advisor on Sub-Saharan Africa to president Nicolas

¹⁸ In French, her title is directrice adjointe.

Sarkozy, and Yves Gounin was from 2006 to 2009 legal advisor to the Senegalese president, and is currently a master of petitions in the Council of State. In 2009, he published a book entitled *France in Africa*. The remaining four wished to remain anonymous. The fact that I was not allowed to cite the others without rendering their comments anonymous affects the validity of this research, which will be discussed below.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Definitional validity – can be defined as whether the operational definition is compatible with the theoretical definition (Hellevik 2003:53). In this case, this implies that the way I carry out the analysis of the theory has to be compatible with the way these theories are defined. I further must ensure that the information gathered documents and other sources, as well as the questions I ask the informants in the interviews, are actually the correct operational questions for determining whether or not the change, or lack of change, in French Africa policy can be explained.

Reliability is measured by whether the data used is collected and treated with accuracy (Hellevik 2003:52-53). Andersen (2006:291) defines reliability as credibility and the possibility of verification of the data. Yin (2003:97) focuses on three principles to increase reliability in a case study, using several sources for data, creating a case study database and maintaining a chain of evidence. These principles are important in ensuring that researchers reviewing the study can trace the steps that the researcher took to reach her conclusion.

In regards to the interviews, there are several possible problems connected to their reliability and validity. First, it is important that the answers of the interviewees were not influenced by asking leading questions (Andersen 2006:289). To ensure that this was avoided, I worked on writing open questions. Further, I tried to let the interviewee speak freely without interruptions, and rather wrote down probe questions to ask after they had spoken.

Second, it is important that both parties correctly understand the questions and responses during the interview, as well as after, when the data is being used in the analysis. The best way of achieving this is to ensure, in advance, that the questions asked are comprehensible and grammatically correct, and to clarify during the interview if there are any misunderstandings. In my case, this was particularly important because the majority of interviews were conducted either in French or in English, and especially relevant to the interviews carried out in French. Therefore, I had a fluent French-speaker look over my questions before each interview, to correct potential misunderstandings and grammatical mistakes. This ensured that if problems arose during the interviews, I could rely on the written questions. Finally, to ensure documentation, and to prevent misinterpretation, of the collected data, one can use a tape recorder (Rubin and Rubin 2005:71).

In regards to Yin's principle of maintaining a chain of evidence, in some cases this has been difficult to ensure, as several of the officials I interviewed wished to remain anonymous. This makes it more difficult for other researchers to verify this information. Nevertheless, these informants did provide valuable information which was pertinent to the analysis presented in this thesis. Therefore, I considered the benefits of including these interviews higher than the loss of reliability when not disclosing the names of the informants.

Another important aspect of the reliability of interviews is to be aware of the fact that these are "*verbal reports* only...[and] subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation" (Yin 2003:92). This was particularly relevant in the cases where I interviewed government officials, because they had a much more favourable view of Franco-African relations than several of the other respondents. This was therefore an important factor to be aware of when using the information I obtained through interviews, and in most cases I could use their versions as the 'official' version of French foreign policy.

Regarding the other sources of data, I had to pay particular attention to the language. The fact that most of the written sources are in French calls for prudence when using

this material, and awareness of the fact that there might be subtle nuances in the French language that can be difficult to catch for a non-native speaker.

5 Analysis: The Neorealist Framework and French Africa Policy

5.1 Changes in the International Structure

According to Kenneth Waltz, significant changes in the international system occur if the number of great powers changes. For example, if it increases from one power in a unipolar system to several powers in a multipolar system or vice versa (Waltz 2000:5). In the period covered in this analysis, two such changes are noteworthy. These two developments are the end of the Cold War and the emerging strength of China over the last decade¹⁹. First, the end of the Cold War had great ramifications for the international structure, because the power structure shifted from a bipolar to a unipolar system (Krauthammer 1990/1991:23). Likewise, the rising influence of China has been an important trend for the African continent in recent years. As Philip Snow writes, “China’s resurgence in Africa has to rate as one of the most striking developments of the early twenty-first century” (Snow 2009:xx). During the period under study, these are the two most obvious cases where power has shifted across states in this period.

Other events, such as the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, have also had great consequences for international politics. However, Kenneth Waltz argues that if it had any effect on the international structure, it is only that it made U.S. power stronger (Waltz 2002:350-351). Although the attacks did trigger renewed American interest in the African continent, this analysis will not include the September 11th attacks, because, as Waltz argues, this event did not shift power across states (Abramovici 2004). A main reason for choosing the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China in this analysis is that they both had implications for the African continent. The following analysis will show how profound these implications were for francophone Africa.

¹⁹ Here, I will focus on China because it is the strongest of the emerging powers, although I acknowledge that also other countries, such as India and Brazil, are gaining power.

I will start by shortly outlining French Africa policy during President Mitterrand's first years, before the end of the Cold War. Thereafter, I will describe how the end of the Cold War affected the international system, and analyse whether this instigated changes in French Africa policy in the following decade. Further, I will investigate whether the developments in policy can be explained through a neorealist perspective. If the neorealist framework gives an accurate description of how states determine their foreign policy, changes in the structure should cause changes in French Africa policy. The third part of the analysis, on the emerging Chinese presence, will follow a similar structure as the first part on the end of the Cold War. Next, I will compare the theory's strength in explaining the developments in policy after these two changes in a summary of the main findings, before finally discussing the limitations of employing a neorealist framework to the study of French Africa policy in the last three decades.

5.2 The Cold War and French Africa Policy

5.2.1 Mitterrand's Africa Policy during the Cold War

In order to analyse whether the end of the Cold War affected French Africa policy, one must first consider the policy during the Cold War. François Mitterrand was president in France during the last years of the Cold War, and remained in power for the first years after the fall of the Iron Curtain. When he came to power in 1981, as the first socialist president of the Fifth Republic, there were expectations that French Africa policy would change dramatically (Whiteman 1983:329). Before the election, the Socialists called for a “fundamental restructuring of Franco-African relations” (Alden 1996:quote from 19,20).

According to Philippe Marchesin (1995:7) in his article *Mitterrand l'Africain*, one can analyse French Africa policy under Mitterrand through four different approaches. The first, which is the predominant view, emphasises the geopolitical context and the international influence of France. France needed to pursue an “active policy towards the African continent”, to maintain its international standing as an important power (Marchesin 1995:7). Part of this was using its influence to gain more strength and

votes behind its opinions in, for instance, the UN. As Mitterrand stated, to the African leaders at the Franco-African summit at La Baule in 1990; “together we represent a front of some thirty, thirty-five countries on the international scene” (Mitterrand 1990).

The second way is a continuation of the first point, namely to either defend or enlarge the French “zone of influence” (Marchesin 1995:9). During the Cold War period, this meant preventing U.S. or Soviet involvement in francophone Africa. If a threat became too strong, and especially if this was in what the French considered to be their ‘backyard’, the French would intervene (Marchesin 1995:9-10). The various operations in Chad under President Mitterrand were, for instance, all to maintain French influence in its former colonies in Africa (Marchesin 1995:10). During the Cold War, the important issue was with which world power the recipient country associated itself. Ketil Fred Hansen describes the period of the Cold War as one where France did not seem to care which policy their former colonies followed, but rather focused on “keeping its strategic alliances, continue its great power politics while simultaneously representing a Western, capitalist alternative to American assistance for African leaders” (Hansen 2009:181-182).

A third way sees Mitterrand as pursuing an Africa policy determined by his time as Minister for the overseas France at the beginning of the 1950s. Whilst holding this position, he negotiated with African leaders to pledge “their allegiance to the French Union” (Marchesin 1995:11). According to Marchesin, Mitterrand seems fixed in his view on Africa from this period (Marchesin 1995:12). Finally, the last approach Marchesin points out is connected to the second part of the analysis in this thesis, namely the focus on personal relationships (Marchesin 1995:12-13). This will be thoroughly analysed in chapter six.

5.2.2 Implications for Neorealist Theory

The first three of the above perspectives on French Africa policy under Mitterrand (not including the point on the importance of personal relationships) fit well into the

neorealist framework. Furthermore, they indicate a lack of extensive changes in French Africa policy in the first decades following decolonization. This is in accordance with structural realist theory since there were no shifts in power during this period, which was marked by the bipolarity of the Cold War. In this context, according to these three perspectives, France focused on balancing power and maintaining its influence in the area, in order to retain its image as a major power. Protecting its zone of influence and preventing the U.S. or the Soviet Union to gain entry, was a way of ensuring that “no other state gains power at their expense”, which is a main neorealist concern (Mearsheimer 2007:74)²⁰.

According to Mearsheimer, another main goal of a great power is regional hegemony (Mearsheimer 2007:83). From this one can infer a possible French policy in francophone Africa, namely that it did not want other powers to interfere in its own ‘backyard’. And furthermore, that it wished to be the dominant foreign power in this area. Although Mearsheimer is referring to countries exercising power in their own “geographical area”, I argue that due to France’s historically close ties to francophone Africa, this notion of regional hegemony can be transferred to France’s role in francophone Africa (Mearsheimer 2007:83). In fact, as mentioned, francophone Africa is often referred to as the French backyard, the *pré carré*. This is clear also from another statement by President Mitterrand. When speaking of the aim of French Africa policy, he argues it is to “preserve the role of and the interests of France in Africa” (Marchesin 1995:9²¹).

By using its influence in Francophone Africa, France also strengthened its position in international fora and organisations, such as the UN. The above-cited statement from Mitterrand about the common front France and the African countries represented shows how the reasoning behind French policy is compatible with structural realist theory, and the Waltzian balance of power-theory. France wished to use Africa to preserve its own power, and balance off the other major powers in the global system.

²⁰ Nevertheless, the French operated on the U.S. ‘side’ during the Cold War.

²¹ Mitterrand cited in Favier and Martin-Roland, cited in Marchesin 1995:9.

Nevertheless, with the end of the Cold War, the perpetual worry that the U.S. or the Soviet Union would gain influence in France's *pré carré* subsided (Alden 1996:23).

5.3 The End of the Cold War and French Africa Policy

The Cold War period was characterised as “The Long Peace” by John Gaddis because of the lack of major conflicts between the two great powers (Gaddis 1986). The U.S. and the Soviet Union balanced each other's powers in a bipolar structure, and did not fight each other (albeit there were close occasions, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis). Instead, the power struggles between the two sides were often fought by proxy wars, many in Africa. Gaddis cites the example of Cuban troops acting on behalf of Soviet stakes in sub-Saharan Africa. Using allies as proxy, rather than engaging directly in the conflicts themselves, reduced the possibility of open conflict between the two powers (Gaddis 1986:135). During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the Western countries competed for influence, and therefore geostrategic factors mattered more than promoting democracy in the African countries (Dunning 2004). In this situation, African leaders could enjoy more leverage and could have more power to do as they wished, because Western powers and the Soviet Union were afraid of losing their influence (Dunning 2004:411-412, Perlez 1992). After the Cold War, when the U.S. emerged as the one dominant power, Africa lost this geostrategic significance (Krauthammer 1990/1991:23, Perlez 1992).

Wolhforth argues that “[f]or neorealists, unipolarity is the least stable of all structures because any great concentration of power threatens other states and causes them to take action to restore a balance” (Wolhforth 1999:5). If France's situation is understood in this context, one can make certain presumptions of how French Africa policy would be shaped in the post-Cold War period. One could firstly expect French Africa policy to change when the structure changed. Secondly, whatever changes it embarked upon would be in France's national interest, since one of the principles of structural realism is that states are rational actors that act according to their own interests, often to increase their power, and with their own survival in mind. I will

employ Waltz's defensive and Mearsheimer's offensive neorealist theory in accordance with which neorealist perspective is deemed most applicable to the different aspects of French foreign policy.

The demise of the Soviet Union saw a wave of democratisation in the former Soviet states in Eastern Europe. This transcended to regions where the struggles of the Cold War era had earlier prevailed. In Africa, this meant that Western powers began to promote democracy and humanitarianism to a greater extent than before (Dunning 2004:422). Once the threat from the Cold War waned, Western states were in a more secure structure than before. This allowed states to open up for the pursuance of other goals than those solely aimed at security, such as democratic and humanitarian objectives. Nevertheless, these goals were still in accordance with the neorealist framework, as long as the pursuance of such goals did not conflict with the motive of increasing security (Glaser 2003:412).

5.3.1 The End of the Cold War and Development Policy

In the post-Cold War era, aid became attached to conditionality from the Western donors, and unlike earlier times, these conditions of democracy and human rights were now more credible as these donors no longer feared Soviet competition or influence (Dunning 2004:411-412,419). Promoting "the republican virtues of liberty, equality, and fraternity" had traditionally been a part of the French *mission civilisatrice*, the civilising mission of the colonial period (Conklin 1998:422, quote from 423,420). Once the Cold War ended, one can assume that France, again, saw the possibility of promoting its former colonial principles.

One might also expect France to change its aid policy accordingly because it did not wish to lose face and possibly also influence internationally. This would entail discontinuing its previous policy of support towards autocratic rulers. Former pro-American autocratic regimes were democratising, and France could no longer justify supporting non-democratic regimes (Gounin 2009:41, Glaser and Smith 2005:107).

This forced France to rethink its relationship with African countries (Alden 1996:23). The response came with President Mitterrand's speech at La Baule.

At the Franco-African summit in La Baule in 1990, François Mitterrand held a speech that outlined a change in his Africa policy (Hansen 2009:182, Gourévitch 2008:382). First, he emphasised that France would continue its engagement in Africa, but further, he stressed that from now on, French aid would come with requirements of democratic development (Mitterrand 1990).

The speech did indeed usher in some immediate consequences. France suspended aid to some of the regimes that refused to initiate change, for instance Zaire in 1991 and Togo in 1993. It also provided help to hold democratic elections, as in Niger in 1993. Likewise, in cases where there were coups, such as in the latter country only three years later, France adjourned its assistance (Cumming 2001:104-105).

Although France, in the above-cited examples, showed a willingness to follow up on its new conditionality policy, Cumming has found evidence that the message from La Baule was subsequently moderated (Cumming 2001:105-106). For instance, France gave Benin less support in 1990 than in the previous year, even though the country had begun a process of democratisation. Meanwhile it increased aid to countries with autocratic leaders such as Togo and Cameroon, neither of whom had taken steps towards democratic reform (Cumming 2001:106). France, he writes, has "been slow to impose and quick to lift penalties on non-reformers", and he cites several examples, such as the cases of suspicious elections in Cameroon in 1992 and 1997, or where autocratic leaders remained in power or regained power, such as the cases in Gabon and Guinea in 1993 (Cumming 2001:106). Furthermore, although the above-mentioned military coup in Niger in 1996 prompted the French to suspend its aid to the new rulers, it soon after recommenced with its assistance to the country (Lancaster 1999:124).

The lack of real change is also evident from how President Mitterrand himself viewed the new policy of conditionality. A year after his speech at La Baule he said: "[l]a démocratie, mais chacun à son rythme", meaning "democracy, but each at its own

rhythm” (Mitterrand cited in Gourévitch 2008:383). Mitterrand was, according to Cumming, uncertain about attaching political conditions to development aid from the very beginning. However, a possible explanation of his doing so was that Mitterrand was afraid that the “newly elected democratic African leaders would turn away from France” (Cumming 2001:196). One can assume that these new democratic leaders would not harbour the same feelings for the old colonial power, and would therefore prefer changes in Franco-African relations. For example, according to Chafer, “the new generation of African leaders has become increasingly irritated by, and less willing to accept, France’s self-proclaimed role as Africa’s advocate on the world stage” (Chafer 2005:21). If President Mitterrand’s inaction was due to his fear of alienating African leaders, then that again may indicate that French interests in Africa are in line with what one would expect when employing a structural realist framework, namely that national interests are at the core of states’ actions. France wanted to keep its privileged position in Africa in order to keep its standing in the international system, and it was therefore important to please the new African leaders. And, according to Philippe Marchesin, the French message of democracy “quickly lost its credibility” (Marchesin 1998:94). Marchesin also quotes Erik Orsenna, who worked in the Élysée under President Mitterrand, saying that France was now “supporting dictators while denouncing dictatorships” (Orsenna cited in Marchesin 1998:94). Ketil Fred Hansen also supports this notion, as his impression is that there was minimal change. He argues that the conditionality announced at La Baule was rather used by Mitterrand as a potential means of pressure for France in its relation to African leaders (Hansen 2010 [interview]).

Overall, as the above-mentioned examples illustrate, President Mitterrand continued to support autocratic regimes despite his speech at La Baule. Aid was given to the “former colonies tied by political alliances, without much regard to other factors, including poverty levels or choice of politico-economic regimes” (Alesina and Dollar 2000:33, quote from 34). Still, Glaser and Smith sum up the consequences of the speech at La Baule, by stating that “of the twenty-two countries present, all introduced multi-party systems, and seventeen adopted a new constitution” (Glaser and Smith

2005:171). One issue, however, is how much these reforms actually meant for the populations of these countries. In several of these cases, it might seem as if reform on paper did not necessarily translate into concrete and measurable changes. For instance, while allowing opposition parties to form in 1990, and formally adopting a multi-party system in 1991, the Gabonese president Omar Bongo has been accused of electoral fraud on several occasions by the opposition, both in 1993 and in later elections (BBC 2009d). The independent non-governmental organisation Freedom House described the situation in Gabon in their 2002 report, stating that despite the changes introduced after 1990 the population of Gabon “have never been able to exercise their constitutional right to change their government democratically” (Freedom House Gabon 2002). But regardless of the suspect Presidential elections in December 1998, France did not adjourn aid to the country (Cumming 2001:347). Alesina and Dollar find, in their study of French aid from 1970 to 1994, that France is one of the few major donors that appeared to disregard the democratic situation in the recipient country (Alesina and Dollar 2000:54). Another informant explains the lack of compliance to the speech at La Baule with the fact that France tried to “ride two horses at the same time” (Anonymous 1 [interview]). In the cases where France was unable to promote democracy, it ensured that it did not lose its influence in that country. There was a tendency that French interests were more important than democracy (Anonymous 1 [interview]).

After La Baule?

The first signs of significant change in French Africa policy came three years after the La Baule speech, in 1993. In the Abidjan Doctrine from September of that year, France tied its aid to the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and the World Bank (Gounin 2009:42). More specifically, the doctrine introduced by Prime Minister Balladur would entail denying “balance-of-payments support to countries which did not fulfil the terms of their economic programmes with the World Bank and/ or the IMF” (Cumming 2001:101). By pegging its aid to the demands of the Bretton Woods institutions in the Franc zone, France downplayed its own influence in the area. Rather

than France, it was now the Bretton Woods institutions that had influence in Africa (Châtaigner 2006:252). Nevertheless, France could still use its position of power within the Bretton Woods institutions to influence decisions, which thus gave France the opportunity to sustain a means of pressure on African leaders (Pontié 2009 [interview]).

During the first period of the presidency of Jacques Chirac, who succeeded Mitterrand in 1995, development policy did not change significantly. According to Gérard Claude, President Chirac stressed that democratisation was a learning process, and that France would not force a democratic process upon African countries (Claude 2007:912). For instance, much of Gabon's debt was cancelled in 1996, and Claude uses this example to show how Chirac pursued his aid policy regardless of the demands of democratisation set out by President Mitterrand in the speech at La Baule (Claude 2007:913). Chirac further "visit[ed] the undemocratic leaders of Guinea, Togo and Cameroon" in July 1999, and he followed up the visits with "lukewarm comments on human rights" at the *francophonie* conference in September that year (Cumming 2000:366-367). As Cumming writes; while favouring in an African context relatively wealthy states like Gabon, Senegal, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, France has to a greater extent than other donors persisted to tie its aid to French "often overpriced, goods and services", and in doing so, bypassed the Helsinki Guidelines of 1992 (Cumming 2001:102). The rational self-interest of France in its aid policy was evident. By securing the purchase of French goods and services, the French also gained from giving development assistance.

As President Mitterrand before him, President Chirac was not fervent to demand democratisation from his African counterparts. Châtaigner references Bruno Joubert (at the time Africa Director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) stating that "France wishes to accompany the movement of African countries towards democracy rather than impose it"²² (Joubert (2005) cited in Châtaigner 2006:253). Since France did not wish to impose democracy on African states, one can suspect that there was a higher

²² My translation of : "La France souhaite accompagner le mouvement des pays d'Afrique vers la démocratie et non pas l'imposer" (Châtaigner 2006:253).

threshold for the French to, for example, suspend aid pending democratic reform in autocratic regimes. It can be argued that this view can easily be used as an excuse to not act when faced with autocratic regimes. Reforms in name, rather than real action, seemed to suffice for the French to continue giving assistance. It can thus be argued that the French have continuously placed more importance on maintaining close relations to African leaders rather than introducing democratic reform in their aid packages.

However, at the end of the 1990s French Africa policy showed more signs of evolving. With the incorporation of the Ministry of Cooperation into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a department in 1998, France lost its 'Africa Ministry' (Cumming 2000:361, Leymarie 2002). Yet the importance of these changes should not be exaggerated, as the new department continued to concentrate on francophone Africa and most of the former colonies were now included in the new priority zones for French development assistance, the *Zone de solidarité prioritaire* (Cumming 2000:363,361).

5.3.2 The End of the Cold War and Military Policy

According to Bruno Charbonneau, French military policy towards Africa has two main components: "military presence and intervention" (Charbonneau 2008:62). By the end of the 1970s, France had signed defence agreements with Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Central African Republic, Senegal and Togo. These agreements allowed for French interventions if the countries faced external aggression, and included clauses that specified that France could interfere in domestic situations where there was foreign support or involvement (Gounin 2009:112, Charbonneau 2008:64). They further gave France precedence in the utilisation of and trading in natural resources such as uranium. Furthermore, in the agreements, African states abstained from trading with those countries that "the French government deemed to be threats to French national security" (Charbonneau 2008:61). It is therefore clear that French interests guided these agreements, and France used the agreements also as a means of protecting its business possibilities. Parts of the agreements were secret, and it is therefore difficult to analyse whether or not France acted in accordance with the

agreements during its interventions, especially in the cases where it intervened against internal aggressors (Gounin 2009:112). An illustration of this is the French operations Almandin I and II in the Central African Republic. In 1996 under President Chirac, the French intervened in the country to counteract riots within the army “without the defence agreement permitting such an intervention a priori” (Gounin 2009:113). This may be an indication that France disregards the defence agreements where it serves French interests, and illustrates the ambiguous nature of secrecy surrounding these defence agreements.

The French intervention, and the timing of it, in Rwanda in 1994 stand out as a grim example of the failure of French military policy in Africa. In April 1994, 800 000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the country. The French had held troops in Rwanda since 1990 to support the Hutu regime of Habyarimana and to protect French citizens in the country. In July 1994 the French launched *opération Turquoise*. This operation had as its aim to secure the southwest region of Rwanda, and to make a “humanitarian ‘safe zone’ for refugees from the Rwandan civil war” (Chafer 2002:348). However, it resulted in the provision of a “safe haven and escape route into Zaire” for many of the fleeing accomplices in the genocide (Chafer 2002:348). Because France had supplied military and logistical backing to President Habyarimana preceding the genocide, France was viewed as implicated in the genocide (Chafer 2002:348).

According to one of my informants, France could not have intervened earlier, as France was seen as being ‘too close’ to the situation with its connections to the country and regime (Anonymous 1 [interview]). This informant emphasised the public debate in France over whether *Opération Turquoise* was a humanitarian intervention or aimed at protecting French interests in the country. According to this informant it was a significant part of the latter element that made France intervene, and one of the reasons behind French support for the Hutus was to prevent the pro-British factions gaining power (Anonymous 1 [interview]). France received national and global criticism for its part in Rwanda, and consequentially a loss of legitimacy in its security policy (Charbonneau 2008:76). Although France did not participate actively in the genocide,

Emmanuelle Pontié argues “it closed its eyes and let it happen” (Pontié 2009 [interview])²³.

A New Military Approach to Africa

Against the backdrop of the failure in Rwanda, France introduced a new military policy. French military cooperation would now be organised along three new pillars. Firstly, France wished to reduce its “permanent presence” in Africa (Claude 2007:915). This can further be inferred from the budget allocation for francophone Africa. In 1990 it was at “137 million euro employing 925 military advisors”, whilst by 2004 the budget allocation had more than halved to “about 65 million euro, employing a mere 300 advisors” (Claude 2007:915).

Secondly, France began increasingly to multilateralise its military operations (Claude 2007:915). France wished to confer with organisations like the UN and its Security Council, as well as regional organisations such as the African Union, in the event of French interventions (Châtaigner 2006:252). By doing so, France could prevent a potential loss of legitimacy associated with unilateral interventions. According to Châtaigner, in some cases, “one can suspect that the intention behind this willingness to multilateralise is to transfer the responsibility, as well as the human and financial costs of a crisis to others” (Châtaigner 2006:252).

Thirdly, France wished to Africanise its policies by giving African countries more responsibility for their own conflicts (Claude 2007:915). A part of this policy was the new policy called RECAMP (Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix) in 1997 (Chafer 2002:349, Gounin 2009:114). This policy of institutionally strengthening African peacekeeping capabilities was comprised of three components. Firstly, it provided training for African soldiers. Secondly, equipment was supplied when necessary at French bases, and thirdly trainings were held every two years to practise peacekeeping operations (Gounin 2009:114-115). By training Africans to

²³ France under Sarkozy has resumed diplomatic relations with Rwanda, and Sarkozy came close to apologizing for French actions during a visit to the country in February 2010, admitting that the country “had made “grave errors of judgment” ” (Sarkozy cited in Sundaram 2010).

handle operations themselves on the continent, the French could for example, avoid potentially costly operations it did not wish to pursue.

Notwithstanding these changes, in the first period of Chirac's rule, France intervened bilaterally in Africa 26 times, more than in the period from 1962 to 1995 put together (Hansen 2009:184). Therefore, despite some modifications to policy, much remained the same. Bruno Charbonneau argues that nothing really has changed. Of the 34 French interventions between 1997 and 2002, during Chirac's first period, only eight were in the name of the United Nations (Charbonneau 2008:77).

Despite the continuing interventions, the changes Chirac implemented are in fact important ones, and have been continued by the current president, Nicolas Sarkozy. The policy of multilateralisation allows France to "keep French influence but make others pay for the costs of the policy" (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]). One must, however, take into account that France in this new situation would have to consider the policies of other states in the joint operations. In terms of interests, this implication is outweighed by the fact that France now holds less responsibility while gaining more legitimacy through its operations. Consequently, this policy can be viewed as being in line with the neorealist tradition.

As seen above, and as suggested by one of the informants, the multilateralisation of interventions might be a result of the delegitimisation of French interventions after the Rwanda crisis in 1994 (Hansen 2010 [interview]). The policy of multilateralisation, moreover, can also be seen to promote French interests. Further, the French can ensure continued influence and that participating countries remain faithful to French commodities, and that France thereby retains, for instance, its "lucrative arms markets" (Chafer 2002:350). This may indicate that France uses the policy of multilateralisation to advance its own interests. More importantly, it might be evidence of the French realisation that a stable Africa can potentially open up "new markets and investment opportunities" on the continent that will bring larger and more far reaching positive benefits for France in the long term (Chafer 2002:349).

5.3.3 Summary of Main Developments

Overall, in the decade after the end of the Cold War, French Africa policy only changed in some respects. The apparent change with the introduction of conditionality at La Baule was not implemented to the degree one would expect. The Abidjan Doctrine, however, did serve to loosen the French grip on the continent. Further, the *cohabitation* with Jospin began a process of change, with, among others, the degrading of the Ministry of Cooperation. In military policy, France still intervened in Africa on numerous occasions under President Chirac. Nevertheless, there were important policy shifts after the disaster in Rwanda, such as the multilateralisation of military policy. These shifts were important in signalling change in French Africa policy.

5.4 Can the End of the Cold War Explain French Africa Policy after 1989?

5.4.1 The Neorealist Framework and Development Aid

In terms of neorealist theory, the developments in aid policy are interesting. France was under pressure to change this policy after the end of the Cold War due to international changes. When the ideological camp a country adhered to became a less significant denominator after the end of the Cold War, democracy became the new focus. For the French, continuing a policy supporting autocratic states could potentially weaken its position internationally, as it would not have been well regarded by the other Western powers. At the same time, it was in French thinking that by keeping its influence in Africa, it would be able to maintain its strong global position. Consequently, France had to maintain strong ties to the African states, while at the same time conforming to changes in international development thinking. This situation led to Mitterrand's La Baule speech, which was a direct result of the focus on democratisation after the Cold War. His response to this challenge was to speak of change, but in reality he did not put force behind his new policy. The French government seemed to accept that several African countries thus introduced multiparty systems in name, but not in reality. One interviewed official likened the results of

French policy to what Fareed Zakaria of Foreign Affairs calls illiberal democracies. In the 1990s, the French mistakenly assumed that democracy could be created, and instead they may have contributed to the creation of illiberal democracies or proto-democracies in their former colonies (Gounin 2010 [interview]). Furthermore, in the instances where there was a lack of compliance to conditional ties, the above analysis illustrates how French development aid to these respective countries continued in many cases. This lack of compliance with the principles it introduced may be understood through neorealist principles, as it was in French interest precisely to maintain close relations to its former colonies. Further, by introducing conditionality, France retained an image as a humanitarian power willing to reform the old colonial relations. This ensured that France did not alienate the new generation of democratic leaders in Africa, and that France did not lose its international position.

France lost, however, some of its influence in its former colonies due to the implementation of its Abidjan doctrine. The U.S. used its standing in the Bretton Woods institutions to hold a greater amount of influence over Africa, including the francophone area (Chafer 2002:353). However, I argue that this loss of influence, to mainly the U.S. was limited, since France to a certain extent bypassed these Bretton Woods institutions when continuing to support autocratic leaders.

However, there are indications of more substantive changes in French policy towards the African continent in the second half of the nineties. Supporting the structural realist position, Cumming sees the end of the Cold War as an important reason for developments in French aid policy during this period, such as the inclusion of the Ministry of Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to Cumming (2000:365), the end of the Cold War, thus created circumstances that enabled a change in policy in the following years, and so these “recent structural changes were really the latest, and possibly the most significant, in a series of reforms”. This shows how the end of the Cold War, and the new political reality that emerged, did allow for changes in French policy, and more specifically, reforms in development policy.

President Chirac was a key player for those who did not want reform, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter. Overall, French aid policy has been, as this analysis indicates, in line with a neorealist framework. French aid policy could be characterised as a balancing act between following the Western powers by demanding democratic reform, and continuing its policy of supporting autocratic rulers in its *pré carré*. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that France continued to tie a large part of its aid to the purchase of French commodities.

In terms of neorealist theory, the close relationship and the continuance of giving development aid to more or less non-democratic regimes can be viewed as one way of enlarging “one’s own alliance”, a part of states’ external efforts in the balance-of-power theory (Waltz 1996a:311). The special relationship enlarged the French sphere of influence, and on occasions, as Mitterrand emphasised, enabled France to speak on behalf of 30-35 countries on the international scene. This power gave France more leverage internationally.

A reason for Chirac’s reluctance to change French aid policy may thus be Africa’s importance for France: politically, economically, as well as culturally. As Cumming states, the developments in French aid policy should be “seen less as a break with the past and more as a bridge to the future, a way of perpetuating French influence at a reduced cost” (Cumming 2000:367).

5.4.2 The Neorealist Framework and Military Policy

The defence agreements co-signed with France’s former colonies were beneficial to the French, and by intervening to protect the incumbent leaders, the French ensured that the terms of the agreements were upheld. These agreements can thus be said to follow neorealist principles. Neorealism further focuses on security; a state’s main concern is to ensure its own survival. In France, this security policy is not about advocating “peace and security alone, but about continuously maintaining and restructuring French power” (Charbonneau 2008:49). However, at times, France focused more on economic considerations than purely security, as shown in the

examples of the defence agreements, but nevertheless its actions are still in line with the thinking of increasing French power and influence internationally.

Mearsheimer argues that although structural realism emphasises the importance of power and security, states can go to war for other reasons, for instance “[i]deology or economic considerations” (Mearsheimer 2007:78). And these wars are in harmony with neorealist theory, if the state does not deliberately take steps that damage “its position in the balance of power” (Mearsheimer 2007:78). The example from Rwanda shows how the French were willing to intervene to protect its citizens and a friendly regime, as well as to contain pro-British factions. In other words, it attempted to continue maintaining its influence in the country, in accordance with the reasoning for French military interventions. Nevertheless, in hindsight, this argumentation proved to be disastrous for France who was massively criticised for its part in the crisis. This experience instigated reform in the French military sector, leading it to focus on increasing French legitimisation while decreasing its responsibility in Africa. This was a rational policy choice after the Rwandan crisis.

The numerous interventions under President Chirac indicate that some parts of French military policy remained the same, despite the calls for change after Rwanda. Chirac’s Africa policy can be summed up in the continuation of three main pillars of previous French Africa policy; “the keeping of a “*pré carré*”, pursuing an openly interventionist policy, and the practice of *realpolitik* denying the international principle of “democratic conditionality” ”, argues Claude (Claude 2007:913²⁴). Development aid and continued support to autocratic African leaders persisted to ensure French influence in the region and continued support from African countries in international organisations and forums. Gérard Claude writes that as Africa allows France to keep her status as a middle power, French Africa policy “has showed a remarkable continuity in the years after independence” (Claude 2007:917).

Nevertheless, there were changes under President Chirac. France sought to multilateralise French operations, both by bringing in the EU as well as through the

²⁴ Quotation marks and italics in original article.

RECAMP initiative, giving Africans more responsibilities for their own operations. This must be seen in context of the “new international strategic environment in the 1990s”, argues Tony Chafer, because it “led France to redefine its security priorities” (Chafer 2002:355). Nevertheless, the RECAMP initiative provided France with a possibility to remain influential in Africa, because they were in charge of the programme (Chafer 2005:19). France can now operate with less responsibility and more legitimacy, while at the same time remaining in control. The last reforms that France enacted can be seen partly as a consequence of the changes in the international system after the end of the Cold War.

5.5 The Emerging Importance of China and French Africa Policy

In this part, I will analyse the initial French reactions, and the subsequent changes in its policy, following the increased Chinese involvement with Africa. As previously mentioned, Chinese presence in Africa is recent. Therefore, the full implications of the emergence of China are not yet distinguishable, and there may also be alternative reasons at play behind the developments in French policy the last decade.

5.5.1 China in Africa

China has emerged during the past ten years as one of the most important actors in Africa, and is still increasing its influence (Tull 2006:459). Trade between Africa and China increased from an already high US\$ 10.5 billion in 2000, to US \$55 billion in 2006. It is expected to increase even further (Alden et al 2009:11). This analysis will focus on the period after 2000, because that is when the Chinese engagement escalated.

Chinese companies are present across Africa, and Chinese authorities have become popular among African leaders because they offer loans and aid “with few political strings attached” (Tull 2006:459, quote from 463). This is in contrast to Western governments, who often demand that certain democratic and human rights conditions

are fulfilled before they give aid or loans. China, on its part, usually only demand that the “One China” policy is followed, which entails that African countries cannot recognize Taiwan as a state if they wish to have relations with China (Tull 2006:463). The Chinese presence is in some ways at the expense of the OECD-countries. While exports from Africa to China increased from 1995 until 2004, exports to the OECD-countries declined in the same period (Alden et al 2009:11). Furthermore, African leaders benefit from Chinese engagement. By investing in oil-rich countries such as Angola and Nigeria, these countries have a possible alternative to Western powers, and it gives them more leverage in negotiating deals and conditions on assistance (Alden et al 2009:21).

China is also emerging as a key player on the international scene (Alden et al 2009:19). In regards to Africa, there is currently a shift in power, where China is increasingly gaining influence. Alden et al argue that the Chinese presence has ramifications for the “international system”, because “[i]t has challenged Western pre-eminence in a region that had long served as Europe’s ‘*chasse gardée*’” (Alden et al 2009:23). Chris Alden calls the increased Asian presence “the beginning of an ‘Africa without Europe’ as a cardinal point of reference for the continent’s international relations” (Alden 2009:359). Kenneth Waltz argues that a multipolar system is emerging, and that “it is emerging in accordance with the balancing imperative” (Waltz 2000:37).

How structural realists view the rise of China and its consequences depend on whether they are offensive or defensive realists. According to John Mearsheimer, defensive realists like Waltz argue that states should refrain from maximizing their power. If they do endeavour to do so, “the system will punish them” (Mearsheimer 2007:72). Pursuing too much power will entail balancing from other states, and risks turning into war, which again might risk their continued existence (Mearsheimer 2007:76). States know this, and it prevents them from desiring further dominance (Mearsheimer 2007:76). Offensive realists on the other hand, believe that states should seek as much power as they can, and depending on the situation, “pursue hegemony”, as “having overwhelming power is the best way to ensure one’s own survival” (Mearsheimer

2007:72). Different structural realists have different views on the role of the lesser powers in various systems (Mearsheimer 2007:79-80). In a unipolar system, where there is one dominant power, lesser powers are likely to avoid conflict with this hegemon. This has for example been the case with the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere. In bipolar systems, minor powers can be useful alliances, although they cannot influence the power balance. However, beyond this John Mearsheimer does not in detail cover the role of lesser powers in the situation where one faces the emerging power of China (Mearsheimer 2007:79-80). Nevertheless, since France does consider itself one of the greater powers, one can deduce that France might not willingly give up its influence in francophone Africa. But France will also avoid conflict at all costs, because it recognises that both the U.S. and China are more powerful.

The emergence of China is gradually changing the international structure. This part will look at whether this new competition from China has led to changes in French policy. One can expect that France would try to defend its influence on the continent and prevent China from gaining ground. Because China's strength in Africa increased between 2000 and 2006, I will include the second term of President Chirac. The main focus however, will be on the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, as during his presidency, the Chinese presence on the continent increased dramatically.

5.5.2 The Emergence of China and Development Policy

In 2001, French development aid was a record-low 0.31 per cent of the French Gross National Income (GNI) (Hugon 2007:59, Hansen 2009:186). When Chirac was re-elected in 2002, one of his priorities was to increase this percentage to "0.7 per cent of GNI by the end of 2012" (Hansen 2009:186). The years from 2002 to 2006 were marked by "an apparent increase" in aid, and assistance was at 0.47 per cent of GNI in 2006 (Hugon 2007:59). In comparison, French development assistance was at 0.6 per cent of GNI in 1989 (Hugon 2007:59). However, these numbers are deceiving, argues Philippe Hugon, as they include a "manipulation of statistics", that is money spent on "receiving refugees and foreign students", as well as "aid cancellations and debt relief"

(Hugon 2007:59-60²⁵). Consequently, French development aid is still rather low. This is partly explained by the periods of economic stagnation that France has experienced. It has thus not had as much capital as before to spend on aid, relatively speaking (Anonymous 1 [interview]). There is also less funding for different cultural events, and the budget allocation for *francophonie* is lower than before (Interview 2, Marchal 2010b [e-mail correspondence]). According to Moncrieff, the share of aid to francophone Africa has decreased, and in the past fifteen years other countries in Africa are surfacing as important beneficiaries of French aid, such as South Africa (Moncrieff 2004:223). This may be a result of a new focus on interests and business relationships in France's relations towards Africa. Another interesting development is that France began to increasingly channel its multilateral aid through the EU from the 1990s, which has "the advantage of diminishing the burden of aid on France while maintaining the special relationship with Africa", as Médard writes (Médard 2005:48).

Nevertheless, the former French colonies are still important in terms of development aid, and the lower budgets do not signify a "disengagement from Africa", France remains one of the most important donors in absolute numbers (Hugon 2007:60). Moreover, despite Moncrieff's findings, Hugon states that francophone Africa continues to be privileged in terms of French aid (Hugon 2007:63). If one goes back to the case of Gabon, repayments of debt were larger than French assistance in 2000, 2001, and 2003, but from 2003 to 2008, French development assistance has been steadily increasing, although not to previous levels (OECD QWIDS 2010). This happened despite Omar Bongo remaining in power until his death in 2009, still with irregularities surrounding his elections (BBC 2009a).

Under the current president Nicolas Sarkozy, development aid is not seen as "charity" or "compassion", but France provides it because it is in the French interest to do so, "it is an investment in our future", said presidential advisor Marechaux (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). The thought is that the more Africans become consumers, the better it is for the French economy (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). President Sarkozy touched

²⁵ Although Hugon labels this as a manipulation of statistics, several of these factors are in fact included in the OECD DAC definition of Official Development Assistance (OECD DAC 2008).

upon this in a speech in South Africa that outlined his new Africa policy. He said that France would be more active in combating poverty in Africa, and that it would “work in a more targeted way to foster accelerated economic growth” (Sarkozy 2008). France would then, have a “bilateral financial commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa” that totalled “€10 billion over the coming five-year period” (Sarkozy 2008). And as Sarkozy rhetorically asked, “[a]fter this, who will dare talk about France disengaging from Africa?” (Sarkozy 2008).

However, as one informant expressed, it is not sufficient with development aid alone to secure growth, there is a need for a second component, namely private investments (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). This focus on investments may also be a way of maintaining influence or power for France through its companies in the region. Emphasis is now put on the usefulness of development assistance to France, and what France can gain from giving aid. This is in line with a neorealist framework. In order to preserve French security, France is willing to contribute to more stability in countries in Africa. The more stable Africa is, the smaller the flux of migrants to France will be (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). In other words, part of the reasoning behind the increased focus on promoting stability in Africa is the thought that this will reduce immigration to France. Immigration has become an increasingly important political subject in France, and is of focus under Sarkozy’s presidency (Pontié 2009 [interview]).

However, within the development policy area, there are also examples of conflicting interests between the Chinese and the French. An informant told me that on one occasion France had worked on saving a rainforest, whilst the government in that particular country in Africa had simultaneously gone behind France’s back and made an agreement with China to take out timber from the same area (Anonymous 1 [interview]). According to Emmanuelle Pontié, the deputy manager of *Afrique Magazine*, France has been obliged to reposition itself in response to the emergence of new actors on the continent, and most notably China (Pontié 2009 [interview]). In more economic terms, she describes the French surprise when China attained several contracts as a result of privatisations in Cameroon (Pontié 2009 [interview]). These

examples show that there may be cases of conflict between the French and the Chinese in Africa.

For African countries, the emergence of China has the possibility of increasing their leverage in the face of France. In that light, it is interesting to note that the French have begun to initiate partnerships with the Chinese, which may be seen as a strategy to reduce the possibility of African leaders setting the two countries against one another (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]). Such collaboration could be in projects of “technical complexity”, for instance, “at the level of ultra-deep water oil exploitation” (Marchal 2009:182-183). In such cases, the technical complexity is such that China will benefit from cooperating with France, which may again prevent African countries from setting the two states up against each other.

Such reasoning may be behind the official French discourse under Sarkozy that welcomes the Chinese to Africa. As one of the French officials I interviewed said: “for us, the more China wants to be partner, the better for her” (Anonymous 2 [interview]). France thus sees benefits with the emergence of China, both for Africa and for itself in the form of partnerships. Nevertheless, there are still concerns about the increased Chinese presence, but the concern was not with the increased competition, this informant emphasised. It was rather with the goals of China in its involvement in Africa. The fact that the Chinese give loans without the conditions that the IMF and France operate with makes it more popular among African leaders. According to one informant, this may prevent Africa from developing, both in terms of democratisation processes and in terms of social responsibilities, such as rights for employees (Anonymous 2 [interview]). Such possible setbacks may again indirectly influence France. An unstable Africa may increase migration flows, as Marechaux claimed in the above citation. According to this official rhetoric, France wishes to aid Africa to contribute to a more developed and thus stable Africa, in order to prevent crises, problems of terrorism and migration to Europe. By giving development aid to Africa, France thus helps ensure her own security, in accordance with neorealist principles.

5.5.3 The Emergence of China and Military Policy

The official military policy of President Jacques Chirac and the Matignon²⁶ was now to denounce interventionism as a guiding principle. They sought a break with the interventions of the past, exemplified by the French *opération Turquoise* in Rwanda in 1994, which “discredited the French diplomacy” (Claude 2007:910). This did not however, prevent several more interventions during the presidency of Jacques Chirac. Claude mentions the interventions in Central African Republic and DR Congo, but the most recent of his examples, the French intervention in Côte d’Ivoire is more illustrating (Claude 2007:911).

Côte d’Ivoire was long the symbol of the strong relationship between France and Africa. Recent events have, however, changed the once so special relationship. In 1999, there was a putsch in the country, where general Gueï took over power from Henri Konan Bédié (Gounin 2009:55). The then leader of the *cellule africaine* Michel Dupuch was a personal friend of Bédié, and wanted to intervene on his part (Médard 2005:51). But, in this case, France initially followed its non-intervention policy, and did not intervene to support Bédié, and further, did not intervene during the elections in 2000 when Laurent Gbagbo came to power, despite Gueï’s ban of several electoral candidates (Gounin 2009:55-57). The French government did, however, suspend aid to the country before the elections were held, but the assistance was partly resumed some months after Gbagbo emerged as the winner (Charbonneau 2008:159). France was, according to Gounin, “no longer Africa’s gendarme” (Gounin 2009:57).

Still, events in 2002, led to the re-emergence of the image of the old imperial power. Laurent Gbagbo asked for French help against a northern rebellion threatening to overthrow his regime, a revolt supported, he claimed, by Burkina Faso and Libya. He therefore called for a French intervention in accordance with the defence agreement. France, however, did not immediately recognise the involvement of foreign powers (Charbonneau 2008:159-160). Yet, France still sent 4000 troops to the country, in *Opération Licorne*, whose mission was to protect French citizens and uphold the

²⁶ Where the Prime Minister has his office.

cease-fire between the two sides. But this solution appeased no one. The rebels claimed France intervened in internal affairs, whilst President Gbagbo said that the French did not respect the defence agreement from 1961, which was meant to secure French aid to protect its “territorial integrity” (Gounin 2009:65). In April 2004, the United Nations became involved in the operation (Claude 2007:911). But the crisis was not over yet, and in November, nine French soldiers and an American civilian were killed in an air bombing attack by Ivorian army forces. Chirac responded by commanding the demolition of what was left of the Ivorian air force, and some days later French soldiers killed several civilian protesters who demonstrated against the French presence (Charbonneau 2008:167-168). Because of the situation, “some 8300 French citizens still in Côte d’Ivoire were hastily evacuated” (Gounin 2009:66). This incident was a serious blow to the African perception of France. In Côte d’Ivoire, youth and others started protesting against the French, and there were real anti-French sentiments in the country (Pontié 2009 [interview]).

An agreement was then signed in 2007 between the government and the rebels that “anticipated [...] the departure, in time, of Licorne and UNOCI”, the UN operation, and in April that year, France began to withdraw its troops (Charbonneau 2008:169).

The affair in Côte d’Ivoire has been a clear setback for French policies on the continent, and instigated further changes in French policy. According to one official, France has no intention of staying in Côte d’Ivoire (Anonymous 2 [interview]). The head of the African Cell in the Élysée from 2002, Michel de Bonnecorse, has said that when France lost its influence in Côte d’Ivoire, it was almost as serious as the fall of the Bastille for the French (Anonymous 1 [interview]). The change in the relationship between Côte d’Ivoire and France is one of the real signs that French Africa policy is indeed changing. Gérard Claude argues that the intervention in *Opération Licorne* is evidence that France “wishes to maintain influence in this region” (Claude 2007:912). In her master thesis on the French presence in Côte d’Ivoire, Anette Frølich reaches the same conclusion, that through its actions, France wished to maintain its strong position in Côte d’Ivoire (Frølich 2008:73). When President Gbagbo was elected, before the conflict escalated, he wished to reform the Franco-Ivorian relations, and a

probable result of these reforms would be “a diminished French dominance” in the country (Frølich 2008:70). As a consequence of the conflict, the relationship has deteriorated (Frølich 2008:71). This can be further induced from the two countries’ aid relationship. In 2001-2002, Côte d’Ivoire was one of the top recipients of French aid, while by 2005-2006 it no longer figured on the top ten list of beneficiaries of French assistance (DAC Peer Review 2004, DAC Peer Review 2008). The example of Côte d’Ivoire serves as an illustration of how Franco-African relations have developed, from tight-knit after the decolonization to, in this particular case, a more hostile relation today.

The experience from Côte d’Ivoire showed the French the possible repercussions of intervening militarily in Africa, when faced with new generations and leaders. As the above-cited official stated, the French now have no intention of staying in the country. It can be argued that this intervention marked a change in French policy, it has made France more reluctant to intervene, and instigated the policy of reducing its military presence on the continent.

Changing Its Military Policy?

The multilateralisation of French military operations was also marked by contradictions. The first operation of the European Security and Defence Policy in Africa, *Operation Artemis* in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was “in a great part launched and managed by France” (Banégas et al. 2007:22). Banégas et al. argue that the reason France wanted an EU-led intervention was that the inclusion of the EU gives legitimacy to the operation (Banégas et al. 2007:22). According to one of my informants, the goal of this policy is more political than military, and the aim for France is to show how well the EU does in these situations before the UN intervenes. The weakness however, is that these operations often are led by France and French troops (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]).

After Nicolas Sarkozy came to power in 2007, he has continued to change French Africa policy towards military multilateralisation, Africanisation of operations, and decreasing the amount of troops and bases in Africa (Gounin 2009:116). To take the

latter point first, in the latest developments in February 2010, President Sarkozy announced the closing down of yet another base in Africa, the Dakar base in Senegal (Bernard 2010). Now, there are only two bases left in Africa, in Djibouti and Gabon (RFI 2010). The fact that France has kept the base in Djibouti may be an indication of the French focus on preventing terrorism (Pontié 2009 [interview]). France further seeks to Africanise its policy, and wishes to a greater extent to have a multilateral relationship with Africa, as was the policy under Chirac. President Sarkozy has further developed what President Chirac began, and Sarkozy wished to bring Europe in as a “major partner of Africa” (Sarkozy 2008). For instance, the training initiative RECAP has now been changed into a European initiative, the EUROCAP (French Embassy UK 2008).

In his speech in South Africa, Sarkozy focused on what he saw as the necessary renegotiations of the Franco-African defence agreements. First, he wished to focus on transparency, and therefore the renegotiated defence agreements would be published in full, in contrast to the past when the defence agreements were secret. The renegotiations of these agreements are a major milestone in changing French Africa policy. The agreements previously gave France a reason to intervene or support the regime in signatory countries in the face of exterior, and domestic, threats (Charbonneau 2008:60). Renegotiating the agreements is a long step towards ending unilateral French interventions in Africa. And by mid-February 2010, France had signed new agreements with Togo, Cameroon and Gabon (Marechaux 2010 [interview]).

As can be gathered from the above, France now pursues an image as a non-interventionist country. For example, President Sarkozy, in his South Africa speech, emphasised that he did not intervene in Chad during the riots against president Déby.

“Three weeks ago in Chad, when rebel forces were attempting to overthrow the legitimate authorities of the country, France refrained from becoming involved in the fighting. I did not authorize a single French soldier to fire on an African, even though for me it was right to support Chad’s legal government. It’s an unprecedented change” (Sarkozy 2008).

The official policy is that the French only cooperated through exchanging information with the government in Chad. There were no French soldiers fighting in battles (Anonymous 2 [interview]). As one of my informants said in an interview, there is a significant difference between the French response to the 2006 and 2008 riots in Chad. In 2006, a French plane fired a warning shot in front of the rebels to warn them not to proceed. However, in 2008 he says “the warning shot was a declaration by the president of the Security Council in the UN” (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). Still, as another informant said it: “it is clear that the presence of French troops had a dissuasive effect” (Anonymous 2 [interview]).

Furthermore, there are claims that Sarkozy did support Déby, and that the reason for this support is twofold (Hansen 2009:189-190). First, the French have a desire to portray their country as “a humanitarian power” (Hansen 2009:189). In the case of Chad, the country is an important base for France in its work with the Darfur crisis, which France has attempted to resolve since 2003. An impartial government in Chad is therefore of importance, and it is likely that the Khartoum regime gave support to the groups behind the riots in Chad in 2008. France thus wanted to prevent these groups from gaining power, and maintain Déby as president, to ensure the continued possibility for a peace process where France can be an important player (Hansen 2009:189-190). Another possible explanation of Sarkozy’s alleged support to Déby is the *Arche de Zoé*-case. In November 2007 nine French citizens were arrested, for having allegedly kidnapped 103 children in Chad (Hansen 2009:190). President Sarkozy travelled to N’Djamena to resolve the case, and “only a few weeks” before the February riots, a deal was brokered where the French citizens could return to France (Hansen 2009:190). Hansen argues that “it is likely” that this can be seen in connection with the French support to Déby (Hansen 2009:190). This is further supported by Emmanuelle Pontié (Pontié 2009 [interview]). Both explanations may indicate that despite the French non-intervention policy, it still meddles in the internal policies of their former colonies when it is beneficial to France. Nevertheless, the renegotiations of the defence agreements mark an important step in the attempt to fundamentally change Franco-African relations.

Although the French claim that China does not represent a great competition to their position in Africa, there are potential areas of conflict (Marchal 2009:191). With regards to military policy, the last few years have seen an endemic distribution of Chinese produced AK 47s on the African continent (Marchal 2009:192). Recently, the Chinese exportation of “heavy weaponry and advanced military technology”, has begun to create concern, especially among the French (Marchal 2009:192). One of the areas where there is in fact an increased competition between French companies and the Chinese is precisely in arms sales (Hugon 2007:66). The French themselves are a potential supplier of these technologies, and the Western powers remain “major proliferators and the biggest sellers of military hardware in Africa” (Marchal 2009:192). However, an increased Chinese presence may threaten this profitable market for the French.

5.5.4 Summary of Main Developments

Overall, in the decade of the Chinese emergence, French development aid has been increasing, and although relatively speaking it is lower than before, in absolute numbers French assistance is still rather high. However, the justification for French development assistance has changed. It is now, at least to some extent, seen as part of a policy to prevent an unstable Africa, and to reduce immigration to France. In military policy, some events mark continuity in French policy, for instance the alleged support of Déby in Chad. Nevertheless, bad experiences from Côte d’Ivoire may have made the French more reluctant to intervene. The current renegotiations of defence agreements mark an important change in Franco-African relations, and further support this last claim.

5.6 Can the Emergence of China Explain French Africa Policy after 2000?

5.6.1 The Neorealist Framework and Development Aid

As we have seen, development assistance can still be viewed within a neorealist framework, although it has changed in some respects from the period immediately after the Cold War. Although French aid now is lower than before, France remains an important donor in absolute numbers. French focus with this assistance is to promote a more stable Africa in order to reduce immigration to its own country. The initial increases in aid during President Chirac's second period may be a way of keeping African leaders pleased, and containing the Chinese presence. The way France is handling the potential competition from the Chinese by initiating partnerships with them may be seen in the same light. The intention is to prevent potential conflicts with China, a policy that may be seen as a strategy to reduce the increased leverage of African leaders. Another reorientation in French policy, is that is now focuses less on promoting *francophonie*, whilst expanding its scope by also giving assistance to countries outside its *pré carré*. This may also seen as part of a strategy to protect French interests, by giving assistance to these countries it may secure the French more leverage in the potential competition with China.

Moreover, when speaking of the Chinese presence, according to some of the interviewed officials, the main expressed concern for the French is the lack of conditionality from the Chinese. The French fear is that this lack of insistence on democratic development and good governance may ultimately lead to a more unstable Africa, and potentially a more unsecure France. This is interesting in light of the previous, and some may argue continuing, French reluctance to themselves conform to these measures of conditionality. Nevertheless, French focus remains, as can be drawn from the above, on maintaining French interests, and this makes French development policy compatible with a neorealist framework.

However, despite the renewed focus on win-win partnerships, some key traits of the old system remain. For instance, Gabon still received development aid in 2008, despite the lack of democratic reform. This may be an indication of France wishing to maintain its influence in the area.

5.6.2 The Neorealist Framework and Military Policy

Over the last decade, French military policy has undergone several changes, like the multilateralisation of policy and, especially, the current renegotiations of the defence agreements. Some of the changes appear, however, to be more cosmetic. For instance, the EU-operations organised and led by French troops show that the French are still in charge of interventions. One advantage for France in this arrangement is that it gives the French the possibility of splitting costs and responsibility, while at the same time increasing the legitimacy of France in its operations. This is in line with a neorealist framework because it allows France to maintain influence, while reducing costs and responsibility. The latter two factors might have damaged French power had France continued pursuing a unilateral interventionist policy. The multilateralisation can further be said to be compatible with Waltz' aim of expanding one's alliances to acquire more power (Waltz 1996a:311).

The reduction of troops and bases in Africa show a change in French priorities. The former colonies are no longer as important, and the strategic significance is now on containing terrorism, and having bases close to the Middle East. The closing of the base in Dakar, whilst keeping the base in Djibouti, fits well with such a change in policy. These policies are in accordance with neorealist principles, as France moves its focus to where the perceived threats against its power are the greatest.

In terms of military policy, there has been a continuation of the multilateralisation seen under Chirac. Furthermore, French experiences from Côte d'Ivoire, have been important in instigating an important change in Franco-African relations, namely the renegotiations of the defence agreements. These renegotiations enable France to rid itself of the intervention clause, so that it is no longer required by secret agreements

to intervene in African countries. This is in accordance with neorealist theory, France no longer has the power and economic capacity to intervene in Africa alone, and French interests are no longer at stake to the same extent as before. If this leads to a halt in French interventions on the continent, this is the most prominent change during the period under study.

However, where French interests may be at risk, such as was evident in Chad, the mere presence of French troops may have a dissuasive effect. French interventions therefore continue to be in accordance with the neorealist view of reasons for war that Mearsheimer described, namely interventions based on other reasons than solely security. In recent years, security has, however, re-emerged as one of the more important motives for its involvement in Africa. This may stem from the fact that France sees itself at risk if Africa becomes too unstable. If, for instance, terrorist networks are allowed to develop in fragile states in Africa, or more of Africa is ridden by wars, this may in turn lead to an even more insecure continent (Anonymous 2 [interview]). This may then result in higher migration towards France, which several officials have argued is a main concern.

5.7 Implications for French Policy

Structural realist theory assumes that states are rational actors (Mearsheimer 2007:74). An interesting question in this respect is therefore what France could gain from claiming to change its policy while not really following this up with actions, as they did after La Baule, and whether this is a rational behaviour for France. One answer may be that by advocating change, France attempted to please the international community as well as the democratic leaders in Africa who did not have the traditional close relationships to France. In this way, the French did not risk their standing as a donor, and did not risk losing its support from the new African leaders. Meanwhile, by not fully implementing the changes they were advocating, they were able to retain the close relations with more autocratic African leaders, ensuring continued French influence in the area. Implementing reforms, on the other hand, might have jeopardized French influence in the area. This might in turn have reduced French

power globally, which would within a neorealist framework be irrational behaviour. These considerations may partly explain why French policy changed so little immediately after the end of the Cold War, in line with rational behaviour in the neorealist framework.

The above analysis shows that neorealist theory may explain the motives behind French policy in Africa. Much of the policy conducted by France is in accordance with neorealist principles. One reason that the end of the Cold War did not lead to greater changes may be found in the circumstances surrounding the events in and after 1989. The rivalry, and sometimes proxy wars between the two super powers happened mainly outside of francophone Africa (Gounin 2009:164,41). In addition, after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia to a great extent lost interest in Africa. The fact that power shifted from two poles to one did not significantly affect the French position in Africa. France had during the Cold War tried to keep these powers out of her backyard, and merely continued with the same policy after the end of the Cold War. This may have contributed to, in the short run, a lack of major reform during these years. Nevertheless, in the longer run, changes did begin to occur in French Africa policy, in both policy domains as explained above. These changes can to a certain extent be said to be a consequence of the changing international system, and the motives may be explained through neorealist theory. But also other explanations may be valid, as will be studied in chapter six.

At the end of the Chirac presidency, France had an official discourse emphasising the emergence of a multipolar world, where France could draw on the EU where that was required. However, this discourse became subdued due to American discontentment during the presidency of George W. Bush (Anonymous 1 [interview]). Nevertheless, the emergence of China has again sparked talk of a multipolar world system, and France welcomes this discourse (Marchal 2009:186). The rise of China “reinforces the credibility of a multipolar world and renders it possible, necessary and virtuous”, which is in accordance with French views, as it can then champion a “great power Europe” (Marchal 2009:195).

5.8 Summary of Main Findings

In the first case, the end of the Cold War, the changes in French Africa policy were to some extent influenced by the Cold War. The fact that France now attached conditions to its aid and loans was a direct consequence of the changes that came after the end of the Cold War. However, this change was more rhetorical than reflective of actual policy, and France continued to support non-autocratic regimes. Nevertheless, the *cohabitation* with Jospin signalled a shift in policy, which was marked by the downgrading of the Ministry of Cooperation. In terms of military policy, these signals were more promising. Despite the fact that France intervened more times during Chirac's first period than from 1962 until 1995, there were now signs of change in French military policy (Hansen 2009:184). France began to multilateralise its policies, and the intervention in Rwanda was one of the factors that triggered these changes. The Rwanda intervention may be regarded as a consequence of the Cold War context, because after the end of the Cold War, France could no longer intervene in Africa without losing legitimacy internationally, especially when doing so in order to maintain pro-French leaders in power. Although these changes took time, they can be considered partly as a consequence of the changed context after the end of the Cold War.

As we have seen, Sarkozy has chosen to focus on what he perceives as a win-win relationship with Africa. This has been evident in development policy, where focus has been on creating a more stable Africa to, *inter alia*, prevent large-scale immigration to France. The reasoning is that a more stable Africa will, as cited above, lead to a more stable France in the long run. French Africa policy can therefore still be understood through a neorealist framework. France focuses more on economic cooperation in its approach, although it still has important military operations, for example in Côte d'Ivoire. France has to a great extent run the EU-led operations, showing that France still has an agenda on the continent. However, it is evident that partly under Chirac and in a greater deal under Sarkozy, France has changed its Africa policy. The renegotiation of defence agreements, the reduction of troops on the continent, and the loosening of relations between francophone Africa and France are some of the signs of

changing times. This is partly because French interests are no longer reliant on Africa, and France sees the EU as a greater vehicle for international influence than Africa. As in the case of the end of the Cold War, there are indications that the French presence is not yet too threatened by the Chinese, as China's focus is primarily on areas outside the French *pré carré* (Gounin 2009:175). Therefore, relations between France and China are not necessarily a zero-sum game, where the increased Chinese presence leads to a decrease in French influence. The changes that have occurred in French Africa policy may, however, not stem only from the increased competition from China, but also from other factors, such as the new focus on reducing immigration, or the generational change in Franco-African relations.

Neorealist principles of state behaviour do to a large degree explain the actions of France in its policy towards Africa. As the analysis above shows, France acts with its own interest at mind in Africa, changing its policy when and in those areas where it can gain the most from reforms. This can be seen in development and military policy. In the latter, France now aims at sharing responsibilities and removing the interventions clause that potentially could become very costly for France; both in economic as well as political terms. In the former, focus is now on expanding beyond the *pré carré* to 'follow' the shift in French interests.

In both cases, the neorealist framework has explanatory power when analysing French Africa policy, because even in the cases of less concrete change, neorealist principles about states motives can still explain the policy conducted. While in the second phase, French policy changed more than in the first case, the changes were initially not as great. This may be because the end of the Cold War did not have immediate consequences for France's position in francophone Africa which can be said to be in accordance with neorealist theory. If the change in structure does not affect a country, its foreign policy is not likely to change. Further, as a middle power, France is not likely to seek conflict with a major power, in this case the U.S. Therefore, the shift of power towards the U.S. did not change its policy dramatically in the first years. Its main aim continued to be to preserve its own area of influence in Africa, regardless of whether there were two or one poles. Nevertheless, as France realised that it could not

continue with the same policy as during the Cold War towards the last part of the nineties, its policy began to evolve.

The emergence of China however, is to a greater extent directly relevant to France, because it is affecting the French position in the African region more profoundly. This may be a reason why the changes in this case were greater. Nevertheless, there are also here doubts as to how extensive the Chinese presence in francophone Africa actually is. Further, the emergence of China is an ongoing process. This means that there is not yet an analytical distance to the object of study, making it more difficult to study the effects of this resurgence.

Despite the recent policy changes, Africa continues to be important to France. As one of my informants said: “[t]he fact that we have this strong relation to Africa gives France another dimension, it is part of the image of France as a great power, which has a privileged position on the continent. This, for us, is very important, and Sarkozy like Chirac, Giscard and Mitterrand, is aware of this” (Anonymous 2 [interview]). The French motives of portraying France as a great power on the continent continue to be present in French policy. This shows the relevance of the neorealist framework when analysing French Africa policy.

5.9 Limitations of the Neorealist Perspective

Structural realism does not explain all relevant factors to French Africa policy. It does, for instance, not take into account the emergence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-state actors such as Al Qaida, because it deems only states to be the main actors in the international system. It was, in fact, international NGOs in France that raised awareness among the public after the Rwanda crisis, and thus played an important part in instigating change in French Africa policy (Chafer 2005:13). Further, the security situation has changed the last decade, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11th 2001. This has made Africa more important for Western powers, because parts of the continent are regarded as a potential breeding ground for terrorists. Western powers therefore began to be interested in preventing

terrorists from gaining ground in Africa. However, because Al Qaida and other terrorist networks are not state actors, they are not included when employing a neorealist framework. Nevertheless, the emergence of such networks may have influenced French policy, although the present study does not touch upon this factor.

Because neorealism sees states as the main actors, and disregards state leaders or human nature, the close personal relationships between French and African leaders are largely ignored in this approach. However, this aspect is of importance because personal relationships between French and African leaders, as well as networks in France and francophone Africa, have been important in determining several aspects of French Africa policy. Unlike the previous generations, the new generation of French public officials do not feel the strong bond to the former colonies (Châtaigner 2006:248-249). Sarkozy may therefore not be as interested in Africa as his predecessors, which may explain why he is seeking to loosen the ties between France and Africa. This might be one of the reasons for the recent developments in French Africa policy. For this reason, I will analyse these relationships in the next chapter, to add to the explanatory power of neorealism.

6 Analysis: Neopatrimonial Relations and French Africa Policy

6.1 “L’Afrique de Papa”²⁷

In the previous chapter, it became clear that there are important aspects of French policy towards Africa that are not explained by structural realism. After independence, several of the new African leaders were not eager to jeopardize their position by ending relations to France, with whom they therefore remained close (Chafer 2005:8). The French, on their side, regard the close relations to these countries as normal (Anonymous 2 [interview]). Keeping these bonds ensured that the patrimonial ties between France and her former West African colonies remained intact in the years after decolonization. According to Jean François Médard, the notion of *Françafrique* is founded on clientelism, as defined in chapter four (Médard 2005:39). In this case, France is the patron state due to unequal dependency; France is not as dependent on each of its former African colonies as they are on France (Médard 2005:39). These relations are “rooted in and strengthened by strong interpersonal ties between the members of the ruling classes of France and Africa” (Médard 2005:39).

These ties go far back, and the bonds from after the Second World War were maintained in the Fifth Republic (Charbonneau 2008:60). The *cellule africaine*, or African cell, at the Élysée was formed around the presidential advisor on African affairs and the president. It was never formally created²⁸, and it operated “independently of either government or Parliament” (Gounin 2009:31, quote from Charbonneau 2008:60). The *cellule africaine* was under the authority of the Élysée, and was an “informal and partly covert network” that controlled the key secret networks (Médard 2005:40). It could be argued that this informal system of networks

²⁷ Colette (2007). An expression literally meaning Daddy’s Africa, used about the ‘old times’, the traditional relationship between France and Africa (Gounin 2010 [interview]).

²⁸ The African Cell has never existed officially in juridical terms, but was “the name history gave the General Secretariat of the Community created in February 1959”, when the Community still existed before the independences occurred (Gounin 2009:31). Nevertheless, the Secretariat continued its work after the disintegration of the Community (Gounin 2009:31).

was more significant in determining French Africa policy than the formal system (Médard 2005:40). The African Cell was initially, under Presidents de Gaulle and Pompidou, led by Jacques Foccart, the *Monsieur Afrique* (Whiteman 1983:336). These networks contributed, according to Charbonneau, to “blur[ring] the distinction between private and public” (Charbonneau 2008:60). This blur between private and public is one of the characteristics of patrimonial relations (Médard 1996:85).

In this chapter, I will analyse whether the personal relationships between French and African leaders can add an extra dimension to the explanation of French Africa policy offered by the neorealist framework. The structure of the chapter will therefore follow the structure of the preceding chapter, divided into the period after the end of the Cold War (mainly the 1990s) and the emergence of China (mainly the 2000s). Here, I wish to shed light on events where these special relations were of significance. However, that relations were close does not necessarily entail that they were neopatrimonial, and vice versa, as will be demonstrated through the chapter. Situations where the two theoretical perspectives may be in conflict will be studied. This can, for example, be where rational actions according to a neorealist perspective conflict with the special ties of a neopatrimonial relationship. I will mostly focus on the political leaders in France and Africa, although the networks have been shown to involve several businessmen, as well as top officials, on both sides. First, I will give some examples of how each president has acted with regards to personal relationships, and consider whether this falls within the neopatrimonial framework. Thereafter, I will analyse if personal relationships can add to the explanatory power of the international changes.

6.2 The End of the Cold War and the Personalisation of French Africa Policy

6.2.1 François Mitterrand

According to Philippe Marchesin, the close bonds between President François Mitterrand (1981-1995) and African leaders were so good it brought back memories of the de Gaulle-era. Further, he writes, “in short, having lost with Charles de Gaulle a

‘daddy’, Africans found in François Mitterrand a ‘uncle’” (Marchesin 1995:5). Soon after Mitterrand’s election, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the president’s son, became the “true ‘patron’ of the ‘African Cell’” (Glaser and Smith 1992:212). However, he was not officially appointed as a presidential advisor until 1986 (Glaser and Smith 1992:221). From then, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand continued heading the African Cell until 1992, when he, or *Papamadit*, ‘daddy told me’, as he was called, was “exclude[d]” from the Élysée, after some rather dubious deals involving French firms and African countries (Médard 1997:27, quote from 28). Following this, he was allegedly a part of what was to become known as the Angolagate scandal. Here, he stood accused of arranging arms deals for the Angolan government between 1993 and 1994, by using “his Élysée connections to smooth the way for the Angolan deal” (BBC 2001, quote from Sage 2009). He was, in 2009, found guilty of receiving several million euros in consultancy fees (RFI 2009).

One can get an impression of how comprehensive these Franco-African networks were in *Ces messieurs Afrique*, by Stephen Smith and Antoine Glaser. Here, the authors describe how the chief executive of Elf from 1989 to 1993, Loïk Le Floch Prigent, had dinner with President François Mitterrand once a week (Glaser and Smith 1992:68). Floch-Prigent was later convicted in the Elf scandal²⁹, where he, together with two of his close colleagues, was on trial with 34 others for having illegally taken 350 million euro of the company’s funds during those four years, some of which was used for bribes abroad and in France (Henley 2003). During his corruption trial, Le Floch-Prigent’s lawyer focused on the fact that the president knew of his dealings, and “condoned” his actions (Henley 2003). This shows the extent of the networks, and how they functioned during the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s.

Changes with La Baule?

After the end of the Cold War, and as mentioned in the preceding chapter, president François Mitterrand introduced political conditionality in development assistance with his speech at La Baule in 1990. In some cases the speech had concrete implications.

²⁹ Elf Aquitaine was until 1994 owned by the French government (Encyclopædia Britannica 2010).

But, even though these examples signalled change, the announced conditionality was to a large degree not implemented. A possible explanation for this may be precisely the personal relationships President Mitterrand had to several of the non-democratic African leaders. Mitterrand wished to continue taking care of his old friends, and therefore did not see any reason to ‘punish’ these friends by implementing conditionality (Marchesin 1998:94). Several of them were in power in non-democratic countries, and one can assume that these leaders would not be pleased with threats of sanction in the form of suspended aid. The Cameroonian president Paul Biya serves as an example, having been in power since 1982 (BBC 2010b). According to Freedom House, both the 1992 and the 1997 presidential elections in Cameroon were fraudulent (Freedom House Cameroon). But despite the lack of democratisation, Cameroon remained a key partner for France in Africa throughout the 1990s, and France did not suspend development aid after the two suspicious elections (Hansen 2009:182, Cumming 2001:106). In fact, in 1994-1995, Cameroon was the second top recipient of French development assistance (Lancaster 1999:119). A reason may be the “personal” friendship Paul Biya had with Mitterrand and later with Chirac (Hansen 2009:182).

However, the Abidjan doctrine introduced by the Conservative Prime Minister Édouard Balladur in 1993 gave France a smaller part in controlling which countries would receive aid. Now, French aid would be conditional upon the African countries implementing structural adjustment reforms of the IMF or the World Bank. Less control implied that France would have a lesser chance of channelling its aid to its friends.

The Death of Houphouët-Boigny and the Devaluation

The devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 was a clear indication of real change after the end of the Cold War. At first, neither the French nor the African elites wanted such a devaluation. Carol Lancaster writes that devaluation “could be seen as the beginning of the end of the franc zone and a step by France away from its African clients” (Lancaster 1999:120). The overvalued CFA franc was a means of maintaining benefits for African elites, such as “consumer goods, trips abroad, and education in France for

their children” (Lancaster 1999:120). According to several researchers it would not have been possible for Mitterrand to go through with this devaluation had the Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who died in 1993, still been alive (Hansen 2010 [interview], Charbonneau 2008:157). Houphouët-Boigny had been vehemently against the proposed devaluation, and the first attempt to devalue was stopped by the African leaders, spearheaded by precisely Houphouët-Boigny and Senegal’s Abdou Diouf (Lancaster 1999:120, Gourévitch 2008:386). The French and Ivorian leaders’ relationship had been close since Mitterrand was Minister of France Overseas in 1950, and Mitterrand himself described it as almost familial already in 1982 (Charbonneau 2008:151, Marchesin 1995:13). The conservative Prime Minister Balladur, on the other hand, did not have the same connection to Africa as others among the French politicians, “but had recognized the serious financial drain on France of subsidizing the CFA franc” (Lancaster 1999:120). Balladur could therefore push through with the devaluation of the CFA.

6.2.2 Chirac’s First Period

The presidency of Chirac, “*l’Africain*”, was also marked by his friendships to several African leaders (Claude 1997:906). Chirac was well liked by African presidents, and often visited the continent (Pontié 2009 [interview]). The Gabonese President Bongo allegedly supported at least one of Chirac’s electoral campaigns, although Chirac denies this (Smith 2010). Due to this support, African presidents had the possibility of influencing policy in France (Lancaster 1999:128). This is one of the elements that show that these relations are clientelist – and thus neopatrimonial – according to Médard, that both parties can make demands and have a certain amount of leverage vis-à-vis the other (Médard 1997:33, Médard 1996:88).

Personal relationships continued to be important after Mitterrand left power. In the case of Rwanda, French leaders had traditionally been close to the Hutu regime. A year after the genocide, this became evident again at the Franco-African summit in 1995. The then newly elected French president Jacques Chirac refused to extend an invitation to Paul Kagame, the new Rwandan president, to attend the conference.

Chirac rather held a moment of silence at the beginning of the summit to honour the late Hutu president Habyarimana (Meredith 2006:526). The personal relationships thus continued across party lines in France. Regardless of the fact that Mitterrand was a socialist and Chirac a *gaullist*, both had nurtured close relationships to the Hutu leadership in Rwanda, and these continued in the immediate aftermath of the genocide.

Nevertheless, President Chirac did introduce some changes. For instance, unlike previous presidents, President Chirac established two African cells. The former ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, Michael Dupuch, directed one in the power of being “advisor to the President in charge of African affairs”, whilst the other was led by Jacques Foccart, “the presidential representative to African heads of state” (Banégas et al 2007:15). Foccart, the *Monsieur Afrique* of previous administrations, was seen by many as the symbol of the close relationship between French and African leaders (Claude 2007:906-907, Hansen 2009:179). Bringing back Foccart can therefore be regarded as a sign that relations would remain close also during the Chirac presidency. According to Daniel Corton, Foccart was “a kind of father, a tutor” to the president, and “rare were the nights when, around eleven, almost like a ritual, Jacques Foccart did not telephone Jacques Chirac” (Corton cited in Claude 2007:907). Foccart thus remained important in Franco-African relations until his death in 1997 (Claude 2007:907).

Another indication of the lack of immediate change became evident in 1997, when France continued to support the Zairian dictator Mobutu. This was “long after his other traditional backers, including the USA and the former colonial power Belgium, had decided to abandon him to his fate”, and despite the resulting “French diplomatic isolation” (Chafer 2005:16). According to Claude, part of the reason for France’s support of Mobutu in international fora was to “preserve its energy interests (the country borders Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic and Gabon), and the idea that Mobutu was the only guarantee against the spread of conflict in the Great Lake region” (Claude 2007:910).

Furthermore, President Chirac initially refused to endorse the plan of including the Ministry of Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was considered an important step in modernising French Africa policy (Chafer 2005:16). Chirac had said in 1995 that “there would always” during his presidency, be a Ministry of Cooperation in France (Chirac cited Gounin 2009:58). This may be of the simple reason that such a move would, “[f]rom a symbolic point of view”, mean “the end of the special relations between France and its former colonies” (Médard 2005:44).

The Emergence of Changes?

Regardless of the above-mentioned examples that signalled that relations would remain the same, the coming to power of the socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in 1997, and the following five-year period of *cohabitation*, would greatly influence the direction of French Africa policy (Chafer 2005:16). Jospin did not particularly care about Africa, and had none of the personal relationships Chirac had to the continent’s leaders (Gounin 2009:53). Under Jospin, bilateral development assistance decreased, military presence was reduced, and “the will to intervene had diminished” (Chafer 2005:17). Jospin was thereby allowed to shape French Africa policy. Precisely because Jospin did not have the close relations that the current, and preceding, presidents had enjoyed, and French policy changed accordingly. His arrival thus initiated a process of normalisation³⁰ in Franco-African relations. Furthermore, the special ties were becoming increasingly privatised, or “denationalised” (Glaser and Smith 1997:16, quote from 18). The networks were ‘taken over’ by lobby groups, who used their connections to politicians and the state to promote their own economic interests (Glaser and Smith 1997:16). The relations between private companies and the state were gradually normalising, which was, according to Glaser and Smith, precisely connected to the “French disengagement from her former colonies” (Glaser and Smith 1997:151).

³⁰ In this context normalisation refers to treating the former African colonies as one would treat any other country.

Furthermore, with the incorporation of the Ministry of Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Jospin came the redefinition of countries eligible for French aid. The new “Zone de solidarité prioritaire (ZSP)” included several former British and Portuguese colonies, which moreover served to weaken the special Franco-African relations (Chafer 2005:17). This shows how France began to open up its policy and look beyond its *pré carré*.

6.2.3 Neopatrimonial Ties after the End of the Cold War?

As can be drawn from the afore-mentioned illustrations, Franco-African relations could, under President François Mitterrand be characterised as neopatrimonial (Médard 1997:23). The case against le Floch-Prigent and the corruption case involving Jean-Christophe Mitterrand show how the public and private has been confused in Franco-African ties, a trait of neopatrimonial relations. Médard concludes by stating that these relations would soon have to change, because “the economic and political context of Franco-African relations is undergoing rapid change” (Médard 1997:34).

Nonetheless, the arrival in power of Jacques Chirac seemed to signal that the close ties would continue. Immediately after taking power, he continued his predecessor’s policy with regards to Rwanda. The Rwanda example further shows the influence of African leaders on French policy. Had the ties not been as close as they were, France might not have ended up playing the role it did during the Rwandan genocide. That the close ties had not ended with Mitterrand further became clear in Chirac’s refusal to end support for president Mobutu of Zaire.

Nevertheless, there were developments in personal relations during this period. The evolving policy under Jospin may be an indication of the importance of personal relations for previous presidents. Jospin himself did not have these bonds, which may be a possible explanation of why the policy shifts only came during the *cohabitation* with Jospin. The inclusion of Anglophone countries, among others, in the new priority zone might entail a weakening of the neopatrimonial ties with the former colonies in

Africa, and indicated that France was now looking to establish relations elsewhere on the continent.

6.3 The Emergence of China and Franco-African Personal Relationships

6.3.1 Chirac's Second Term

While Chirac's first term was marked by the cohabitation with Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and his reforms, Chirac's re-election entailed that "France announced its return to Africa" (Gounin 2009:61). In the UN, France spoke in favour of an African country obtaining a permanent seat at the Security Council. In return, France on several occasions expected favours, such as votes on important matters in the UN. It has further been argued that France only stood up for African interests when these coincided with their own (Gounin 2009:61-62). In other words, these actions 'on behalf' of African countries were probably in most cases just as much to suit French needs and interests.

However, during Chirac's second term, he began to look outside the traditional *pré carré*. Furthermore, he developed relationships to other African leaders, such as Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. French interests on the continent were re-evaluated, and became increasingly a result of French economic interests "and especially the exploitation of business opportunities and the guaranteeing of secure access to strategically important raw materials, notably oil" (Chafer 2005:18). This was the reasoning for the expansion beyond its backyard. In addition, the number of *coopérants*, French "technical assistants" working in Africa, declined, which was to further weaken ties in the Franco-African relation (Chafer 2005:19, quote from Moncrieff 2004:71).

Nevertheless, France still needed its African allies on the international scene. In 2003, France used the 22nd France-Africa summit³¹ to “assert itself internationally” during the US-Iraq conflict (Wauthier 2003). The African countries represented more than a quarter of the United Nations members, and were therefore of significant importance to France. All African states (but Somalia) were represented at the summit, and Chirac won support for a declaration stating that before taking military action against Saddam Hussein, the weapons inspectors should be allowed to complete their investigations (Wauthier 2003). The support from the African countries gave France more power internationally when voicing its opinion against the view of the U.S. This case shows how significant the African countries are to France on the international scene, and the importance to it of maintaining its influence in the region.

Moreover, it was seen as a controversy that Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, was invited by Jacques Chirac to attend the same conference. This was, however, to please two other African presidents. Neither South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki nor Nigeria’s Olusegun Obasanjo would have been present at the conference had Chirac neglected to invite the Zimbabwean president (Wauthier 2003). This may be an indication of the extent of the African leaders’ importance to France, that Chirac was willing to risk criticism from other Western powers to please his African counterparts.

Because China is increasing its presence in Africa, it becomes more important than ever for France to keep African presidents on its ‘side’. This might have been a reason for Chirac’s wish to increase aid in his second period. Nonetheless, some African leaders and their supporters wanted to end the ‘special’ relations. The French operation in Côte d’Ivoire resulted in an outbreak of anti-French feelings in the old colony, traditionally one of France’s closest allies on the continent. The intervention sparked anti-French demonstrations (Pontié 2009 [interview]). Further, there were talks of a “‘new decolonisation’ from France” from the president’s supporters in Côte d’Ivoire (Doza 2003 cited in Chafer 2005:20). The new African leaders were “increasingly

³¹ The official name of the conference has been changed from Sommet Franco-Africain to Conferance des chefs d’Etats d’Afrique et de France, symbolising the changes in the relationship (Hansen 2009:187-188).

irritated by, and less willing to accept, France's self-proclaimed role as Africa's advocate on the world stage" (Chafer 2005:21).

6.3.2 The Presidency of Sarkozy- "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"? 32

In a speech in Benin before he was elected, Nicolas Sarkozy called for a reform of the relationship between France and Africa. He wanted to base politics on more than the "quality of the personal relations between the state leaders", and end the paternalism and networks that had previously characterised the relation (Sarkozy 2006). Two events immediately after his inauguration pointed towards a different direction for the development of personal relationships between France and its former colonies. First, unlike his predecessors Pompidou, Mitterrand and Chirac, the first African president he received at the Élysée palace was not Omar Bongo of Gabon. Rather, he chose to break with this tradition by inviting the Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Hansen 2009:191). Liberia is not a former colony, and this might thus have been a symbolic gesture to signalise that the days of *Françafrique* were over. However, Sarkozy's advisor, Remi Marechaux, denies that there was anything "other than the wish to honour an outstanding African leader" behind this gesture, despite another informant stating that it is evident that Gabon is more important to France than Liberia (Marechaux 2010 [interview], Anonymous 2 [interview]). Consequently, one would have expected Sarkozy to give President Bongo preferential treatment to signalise the importance of Gabon, rather than first meet President Sirleaf-Johnson. Second, once Sarkozy was in power, he dismantled the *cellule africaine* at the Élysée. Now, the advisors in charge of questions regarding Africa are incorporated in the Diplomatic cell³³, and issues regarding Africa would be treated as any other diplomatic case at the Élysée (Gounin 2009:73). This was a strong symbolic move, as the African Cell had been regarded as an important way of maintaining the relationships between France and Africa (Chafer 2005:20).

³² "The more it changes, the more it remains the same" (author's translation) (Whiteman 1983:329).

³³ The Diplomatic cell encompasses all advisors on foreign policy at the presidential palace (Marechaux 2010 [interview]).

The symbolism of the first point must, however, not be exaggerated. Omar Bongo was received at the Élysée a day after the Liberian president, and Nicolas Sarkozy ensured that Senegal and Gabon were the first African countries he visited as president (Gounin 2009:77). That the Gabonese president Omar Bongo (before his death in June 2009) was still able to influence the French president became evident in the relocation of Jean-Marie Bockel, the Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophonie. Six months upon taking his post, Bockel vowed to “*sign the death certificate of Françafrique*” (Bockel cited in Gounin 2009:74³⁴). Bockel was soon thereafter relocated to another position. According to sources at the Quai d’Orsay³⁵, writes the newspaper Le Figaro, this was because the Gabonese president asked for his resignation due to his views on *Françafrique* (Le Figaro 2008). Sarkozy’s advisor Remi Marechaux on the other hand, argues that no foreign state has the power to decide who is minister in France (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). Nevertheless, argues Emmanuelle Pontié, it was France’s interests in Gabon, rather than a close relationship between Bongo and Sarkozy, that triggered the relocation of Bockel (Pontié 2009 [interview]).

Several of my informants pointed out that Nicolas Sarkozy does not seem interested in Africa. When visiting the continent he seems uncomfortable (Gounin 2010 [interview], Hansen 2010 [interview], Pontié 2009 [interview]). According to Emmanuelle Pontié, he covers several countries in only a few days, and does not take the time for long meetings or visits, in contrast to his predecessor Chirac who often stayed longer than initially planned on visits. Furthermore, and again unlike his predecessors, Sarkozy does not seem to have personal relations with his African counterparts (Pontié 2009 [interview]). However, presidential advisor Remi Marechaux denied this, and said that the President has equally good relationships with all his homologues. He continued by stating that, “relations with African leaders are not more or less personal than relation with European or American leaders” (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). He emphasised that under Sarkozy, there is focus on normalising the ties between France and Africa. Africa will not be treated differently from, for example the Middle East, and the

³⁴ Italics in Gounin 2009:74.

³⁵ Where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is situated.

administration wants a “coherent” French foreign policy (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). Other informants also focused on the normalisation of ties under Sarkozy (Anonymous 2 [interview]).

In accordance with this view of Sarkozy as less interested in Africa, other areas were of greater importance to the French president. For instance, domestic policies may seem to have more of Sarkozy’s attention than African affairs. Moreover, he is interested in how his electorate perceives him. This is his main focus, also with regard to African policy. According to one of my interviewees, it was Sarkozy’s wish for popularity in France that motivated him to support president Déby in Chad in 2008, in exchange for the return of the French citizens arrested in the *Arche de Zoé* affair in Chad (Pontié 2009 [interview]). If this is the case, that the special ties were not important in this case, and president Sarkozy acted purely in his ‘own’ interest, this might be an indication that relations are indeed changing.

The increased competition from other states, and particularly China, has given African leaders more leverage vis-à-vis France. One example is the above-cited case where Chirac was obliged to invite Mugabe to the summit. Another was when Niger was able to renegotiate its uranium deal with France in 2008 (UK Reuters 2008). Niger increased the price for uranium, and was able to do so, because of the interest from other states in its uranium. One of the potential buyers was, in fact, China (Gounin 2009:170).

The Revival of Neopatrimonial Ties under Sarkozy?

There are, however, developments that point in the opposite direction. It is interesting that Robert Bourgi, the “legatee of France’s notorious African networks” has been given an important role in Sarkozy’s administration (Smith 2010). According to Smith, Robert Bourgi, “with the Elysée chief of staff, Claude Guéant, is in charge of *l’Afrique de nuit*, where the lucrative, personalised politics that Sarkozy denounced during his presidential campaign continue to thrive” (Smith 2010). Furthermore, in the case of the relocation of Bockel, it was, according to Yves Gounin, Robert Bourgi who had

given the message to the French president (Gounin 2009:83). Moreover, when Sarkozy visited South Africa and wanted to meet with Nelson Mandela, it was, again, Robert Bourgi who suggested that Sarkozy ask Omar Bongo of Gabon to arrange it, which he did (Glaser and Smith 2008:194-195, Gounin 2009:82). Smith further writes that “the shady elisions of public and private, the permutations of continuity and broken promises for which Sarkozy and his people have settled, are anachronisms, at odds with the reality of shrinking French engagement—both government and private— with sub-Saharan Africa” (Smith 2010). This picture is in stark contrast to the normalisation several of the informants emphasised in the interviews (Anonymous 2 [interview], Marechaux 2010 [interview]).

6.3.3 Neopatrimonial Framework and the Emergence of China

In his second period, president Chirac again began to nurture relations to his African counterparts. However, it was just as much to leaders outside the *pré carré*. Giving in to these leaders’ demands, as Chirac did by inviting Mugabe to the Franco-African conference, may be a way of ensuring continued African support, and may thus be indicative of a neopatrimonial relationship where both sides can make demands in the relationship, and in this case it seemed to have expanded beyond the former French colonies.

There has, however, been a generational change, both in France and Africa. In France, officials taking over do not have the same relation to Africa as their predecessors (Châtaigner 2006:248-249). This development has weakened the close ties between France and the former colonies. The new generation does not have the same personal sentiments regarding these countries, and might therefore not resent normalisation in the relationship.

According to Roland Marchal, Franco-African relationships have now changed form. Earlier, *Françafrique* was about the shared vision of French and African politicians, whilst now the relationship is based upon economic interests rather “than a shared

vision” (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]). According to Marchal, now, when talking of *Françafrique*, it is about those who wish to

“blur the divisions between public and private interests so that they can make money. [...] Trying to push for private diplomacies and so on, exactly what president Sarkozy is doing, maybe because of the strong role played by Claude Guéant” (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]).

During the rule of Sarkozy, and regardless of his initial criticism and wish for change, one of the characteristics of a neopatrimonial relationship, namely the blurring of private and public, seems to have reappeared. However, now it is economic interests more than the close relations that are at ground for this revival. A concrete illustration of this can be the contrasting responses to former colonies depending on whether they are of economic interest to France. For instance, before coming to power, he criticised the 2005 election in Togo, calling it a “sham”, and after becoming president he has ensured that French officials have met with the main opposition leader (Boisbouvier 2010). However, as Boisbouvier writes, Sarkozy can criticise Togo, because the country “is not strategically placed like Chad and lacks Gabon’s oil wealth. Clearly, Paris is more demanding with Lomé than with other capitals” (Boisbouvier 2010). With regards to the former colonies where France has economic interests, Sarkozy is much more reticent when it comes to open criticism of the situation (Boisbouvier 2010). As presidential secretary-general Claude Guéant says when describing Sarkozy’s Africa policy: “[w]e’re not going to fall out with those who do us great service” (Boisbouvier 2010). This may show how the neopatrimonial framework is still relevant when analysing French Africa policy, despite the normalisation that was first seen under Chirac and that several of the informants emphasised when speaking of Sarkozy’s policies.

Although the dismantling of the African cell was a strong symbolic move, it may not have had the greatest implications for how African affairs are run from the Élysée (Gounin 2009:84). It is argued that although it is no longer called the African Cell, the advisors on Africa have the same offices and the same structure as before (Gounin 2010 [interview]). There are more advisors on Africa (3 over 12) in the Diplomatic

cell than on the other areas (“2/12 for EU; 2/12 for “global affairs”...”) (Marechaux 2010 [interview]). Rather than a normalisation in the relations towards Africa, the power has been shifted towards the secretary general of the Élysée, Claude Guéant (Gounin 2009:84). Moreover, Guéant is now in charge of African affairs, according to one informant, supervising the advisors responsible for Africa in the diplomatic cell (Gounin 2010 [interview]). Similarly, if Omar Bongo indeed was the reason, or part of the reason, behind the reassignment of Bockel, this may serve as an example of how African presidents still are able to influence France and French policy. This is one of the characteristics of neopatrimonial relations, that the “client is not a puppet, but rather has a variable degree of autonomy and can influence its patron” (Médard 2005:39).

Overall, French Africa policy under Sarkozy can be said to be contradictory. The above-cited examples and the important role played by Robert Bourgi indicate the revival of neopatrimonial ties. However, there are other illustrations indicating change. One of these is the renegotiation of defence agreements, as covered in the previous chapter. These renegotiations give France fewer possibilities to support old friends in Africa, and are a sign that France no longer wishes to play this role in Africa. This is a clear indication that relations are in fact normalising under Sarkozy. This may further be an expression of the current generational change. France no longer has as much interests in its *pré carré*, and does therefore not wish to maintain or support the leaders of these countries. However, with regards to the blurring of private and public, and neopatrimonial ties, there are, as seen above, other indications that these relations are reviving under Sarkozy.

6.4 Neorealist Framework and the Revival of Neopatrimonial Ties?

6.4.1 The Presidency of Mitterrand

Personal relationships may add to the explanation of why at least one of the changes in policy caused by the end of the Cold War, namely the introduction of political

conditionality at La Baule, was not implemented as rigorously as it may otherwise have been. The structural realist framework implies that changes in power in the international system will cause states to change their policy accordingly. In this case, the changes introduced at La Baule might have been realised in actual policy to a much larger extent had it not been for the special ties and networks constraining this change from occurring. The La Baule speech shows that the end of the Cold War actually had implications for French Africa policy, to the extent that Mitterrand found it necessary to introduce political conditionality. However, political conditionality conflicted with the personal bonds France had to the leaders of its former colonies. One may say that there was a conflict between the rational action following the international structure within a neorealist framework, and the personal relations and networks between France and francophone Africa. Moreover, the personal relations may have been important to induce France to not fully implement the democratic conditionality the La Baule speech promised. Nonetheless, acting in regard to the opinions of their personal ‘friends’ can be classified as a rational choice. To keep their influence on the continent, they were dependent on maintaining good connections to these African rulers, and could not easily cut their support to these same countries. According to Médard, there is little evidence that the French elite cared too much about political conditionality, because “genuine support for promoting democracy and human rights in Africa was in reality extremely limited, among the French political elite” (Médard 2005:52).

In the case of the devaluation as well, there was conflict between the rational approach, namely devaluation, and the personal relationship between African and French elites, as shown above with the first, unsuccessful attempt at devaluating which was stopped by the African leaders. Nevertheless, the CFA franc was a “serious financial drain” on France, making it more rational to devalue sooner rather than later (quote from Lancaster 1999:120). The devaluation, which in accordance with the structural realist framework would increase French economic power, could occur once the main person opposing such a step passed away. In addition, Prime Minister Balladur did not have close relations to the African leaders, and none of the other

African leaders had the same influence on Mitterrand as Houphouët-Boigny enjoyed. Both these two examples show how the close Franco-African ties can help explain French Africa policy.

6.4.2 Chirac's First Period

Bringing Foccart back to the administration was an indication that Chirac had no intention of changing French Africa policy. Another case where it became evident that Chirac would continue to rely on neopatrimonial (more specifically, clientelist) relations was his support for his friend, the Zairian dictator Mobutu. If France were to follow the other Western countries in this case, it could be seen as rational to end its support for Mobutu. However, supporting Mobutu was also in line with French interests. This was because of the strategic location of Zaire (Claude 2007:910). In line with this thought, the choice to support Mobutu was therefore the most rational choice, because not doing so could possibly jeopardize French energy interests. This is an interesting case, because the neopatrimonial ties bring forth actions that are still in line with a neorealist framework, namely basing actions on French interests. The two perspectives may be said to complement each other and led to the same result: the continued support of Mobutu. In more general terms, the reforms initiated by Jospin show that personal relations were weakening and that a new generation of political leaders now emerged without the same bonds to the African leaders as previous generations. The coming to power of Jospin was therefore significant in initiating reform in French Africa policy.

6.4.3 Chirac's Second Term

It has been argued that the normalisation in Franco-African relations during the cohabitation with Jospin, and during Chirac's second term, happened because Chirac let the diplomats and bureaucrats make the decisions (Marchal 2010a [phone interview]³⁶). The military presence on the continent decreased, and anti-French

³⁶ According to Marchal, this was because Chirac no longer was in good health during his second mandate (Marchal 2010c [e-mail correspondence]).

sentiments increased. Further, the number of government advisors declined. Focus was now on business. This policy can be interpreted as being more rational in terms of a neorealist framework, and it followed the normalisation of Franco-African relations. Furthermore, there was a development in the Franco-African summits. Initially, they were only for francophone African leaders, but they have gradually opened up, and in 2003, all African presidents, apart from Colonel Gaddafi, were invited to attend the conference (Chafer 2005:19). It was clear that France wished to broaden its influence, which might be a response to an increased competition from powers such as China. If Chirac recognised that ties were becoming weaker, he might try to broaden France's reach in the region. By broadening the French reach in Africa, it is easier to avoid the Chinese competition, if it is indeed deemed as threatening by the French.

6.4.4 The Coming to Power of Sarkozy

The increased power of China has further amplified the leverage of African leaders, as illustrated in the previous chapter. An example is Niger, as mentioned the country was able to increase the prize France was paying for its uranium, because of the interest from other countries, such as China (Gounin 2009:170). Despite Sarkozy's emphasis in Benin on ending the familiar relations between France and Africa, there have been signs of a revival of neopatrimonial ties during his first three years. One of these signs is the increasingly important role played by the Secretary General at the Élysée, Claude Guéant. Moreover, the fact that Robert Bourgi was brought into the administration further suggests a renaissance of *Françafrique*. In his speech in South Africa, Sarkozy also focused on the need for African members on the UN Security Council (Sarkozy 2008). This move may be an attempt to expand French influence, by establishing relations with countries outside the *pré carré*, in accordance with Waltz' principle of "enlarge one's own alliance" (Waltz 1996a:311). If France openly supports the inclusion of an African state in the Security Council, this might in turn mean that this country will be favourable to France.

Nonetheless, there are indications that Franco-African neopatrimonial, and close, ties are waning. If, as one of the interviewees stated, Jean-Marie Bockel was not relocated

because of the close relations between Sarkozy and Omar Bongo, but rather because of the French strategic interests in Gabon, this may indicate a weakening of the close relations, substituted by an increased focus on French interests and business (Pontié 2009 [interview]). This is compatible with a neorealist framework. Now, it is not necessarily the personal relations that give African leaders leverage, but rather French interests in the respective African countries.

One factor enforcing this development is thus the generational change in both France and Africa, with the emergence of new leaders in both places. Because of these changes, French leaders no longer have the same means of pressure as previously, as one of my informants said, “French influence in Africa is ... grossly exaggerated, we [the French] cannot influence Africa the way we used to” (Gounin 2010 [interview]). If the competition from China increases, and the relationships remain weak, then the French can no longer rely on these relations to promote French interests on the continent. This may be a reason why the neopatrimonial networks have revived under Nicolas Sarkozy. However, the networks have partly changed form. Now, it is less based on personal relations because of a common past, but more based on business interests in the future. Therefore, France has also expanded its policy in Africa, operating beyond its *pré carré*. One can assume that this is part of a response to the increased Chinese presence on the continent.

6.5 Still “l’Afrique de papa”? The Implications for a Neorealist Framework

The neopatrimonial relations have evolved from Mitterrand to Sarkozy. During Mitterrand’s presidency, the relationships had a clear neopatrimonial form. These close relations can partly explain the slow French adaptation to changes in the international structure with the end of the Cold War, as could be seen in the case of La Baule. Under Chirac, however, the relationships changed, much because of Lionel Jospin’s influence on the Africa policy. When Jospin was prime minister, the special relationships were not allowed to influence French policy to the same extent, and several policy reforms were implemented. This shift also symbolises the changing

reality both in France and on the African continent. In France, a new generation has taken over, and these new people do not have the same bonds to the former colonies as previous politicians and bureaucrats. Likewise, there is a shift in Africa. African leaders are increasingly looking elsewhere than to their former coloniser, and anti-French sentiments are surfacing, such as one has seen in Côte d'Ivoire.

However, under Sarkozy, one is seeing a revival of these networks. But there is a central difference in policy, namely that now one is not constrained to only the *pré carré*. As the above illustrations indicate, one reason for this may be the increased competition from China, which demands that France focuses on preserving good relations in order to maintain both influence, and economic and strategic interests. How neopatrimonial these relations are, or if the change is permanent, are difficult to judge, as Sarkozy has not yet completed his period as president. While he is in some areas pursuing a policy of change, for instance by integrating the African Cell into the Diplomatic cell and renegotiating all the defence agreements, other areas point to a revival of the *Françafrique* networks, such as the role of Claude Guéant in French Africa policy, supervising the Africa advisors in the diplomatic cell (Gounin 2010 [interview]). However, the reasoning now is different from before. Before, the policy was motivated by personal friendships, often because of common experiences, such as Chirac and Eyadema who served together in Algeria (Marchal 2010b [e-mail correspondence]). Now, the motivation is business, and relations are pursued in countries where France has interests. This may be a response to the increased importance of China in Africa and indicate that Sarkozy attempts to use the means available to maintain French influence and business on the continent.

Several of these illustrations show that in some examples these two perspectives, neorealism and neopatrimonialism, do indeed complement each other. Previously, pleasing leaders in countries where France had major interests, to maintain its influence and interests in the area, was rational also from a neorealist perspective. One might argue that regardless of which French president was in power, the generation of leaders after decolonisation would follow the same policy in this regard. One reason for this claim is that the policy was seen to follow across party lines in French politics,

both Socialists and Conservatives followed similar policies. Overall in the period of study, French Africa policy seems to be based on securing French interests, which is in accordance with neorealist principles, and as shown above, the close personal relations often coincided with these principles, although not always.

7 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have studied to what extent international structural changes and personal relationships between French and African leaders can explain the evolution of French Africa policy from 1981 until today. To answer the research question, I first looked at whether there have been changes in this policy during the last three decades. Then I analysed to what degree the changes could be explained by international structural changes and by personal relations between French and African leaders. To do this, I used neorealist and neopatrimonial theory respectively. I focused on two central changes in the international system during the period, namely the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China. The main focus in the study has therefore been on developments after the end of the Cold War until today, although the last years before the fall of the Iron Curtain were also studied.

In the introduction I proposed a model of the relationship between the variables, where the structural changes' effect on French Africa policy would be studied in most detail. As has been evident through the analysis, I have not looked at how these two changes have influenced the personal relationships between French and African leaders. This relationship was not possible to study within the present framework. The complementary analysis in chapter six rather focuses on how the personal relations have affected the French policy instigated by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China as a major power on the African continent.

From 1981 to the end of the Cold War, during Mitterrand's first years, there were no great changes in French policy. Although some expected change with the Socialists in power, Mitterrand simply continued with the African policies of his predecessors. Likewise, the personal relations between Mitterrand and his African counterparts were close, and little seemed to change in this regard either. This lack of change is in perfect accordance with a neorealist framework. Because there were no great power shifts during this period, the neorealist framework does not make presumptions of a change in policy during these years.

The end of the Cold War, on the other hand, instigated global changes that, according to a neorealist framework, could cause a change in French Africa policy. In development policy, such changes initially seemed to appear. With the speech at La Baule, Mitterrand introduced political conditionality in development assistance. This was seen as a direct consequence of the global focus on democracy and human rights that came in post-Cold War era. However, the introduction of conditionality did not result in immediate concrete measures, and France to a large degree continued supporting autocratic leaders in Africa. Nevertheless, over the next years French policy began to change, and the inclusion of the Ministry of Cooperation into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a manifestation of this development. Equally, the subsequent redefinition of the prioritised zone, which now encompassed non-francophone countries, indicated a shift in French priorities.

Both President Mitterrand and Chirac continued to pursue an interventionist military policy in Africa. However, mainly due to its much-criticised role in Rwanda, France suffered a loss of legitimacy in its operations on the continent. This forced the French to reconceptualise its military approach. France then wished to regain the legitimacy it lost in Rwanda, and introduced a new policy. This emphasised Africanisation, multilateralisation, and a reduced presence in Africa. But despite these changes, the French could to a large extent still continue playing the same role on the continent. For instance, through its training operation RECAMP, France could maintain control over African forces, and it further allowed France to for instance continue selling arms to African countries, thereby retaining an important market for the French.

During this period, it is particularly relevant to combine the two theoretical perspectives with regards to development policy. An important reason for why Mitterrand did not implement conditionality was the personal–and neopatrimonial–relationships he had to his African counterparts. Likewise, neorealist principles explain the lack of compliance to the introduced conditionality, as it was in French interest to maintain close to the African leaders. Moreover, the relations continued across party lines, indicating that it was rational for French presidents to keep such relations.

Therefore 'punishing' them for not reforming would have been irrational behaviour for France.

In military policy, it is also fruitful to combine the two theoretical perspectives. Neorealism explains how the international system changed with the end of the Cold War. Because of this change, France could no longer continue supporting pro-French African leaders, such as it attempted to do in Rwanda. Thereby, the new political reality after the end of the Cold War instigated changes in French Africa policy. However, the close relations between French and African leaders delayed these changes. For instance, the close relations ensured continued support to the leaders in Rwanda in the prelude to the genocide. Not only were the relations close, but during Mitterrand's presidency, these relations had clear neopatrimonial traits, as evidenced by the conviction of Floch-Le Prigent and the Angolagate scandal. Therefore, the changes in policy emerged to a greater extent with Prime Minister Jospin, who did not have these bonds to African leaders that Mitterrand and Chirac had.

As these examples show, structural changes and personal relationships can to a certain extent be said to have complementary explanatory powers in the analysis of French Africa policy in the decade after the end of the Cold War. In this period, French focus was on maintaining its influence in the *pré carré*, and so France benefited from the strong personal relations. Such a policy can be seen to be within a neorealist framework, with focus on portraying France as a great power, and using its influence in its former colonies to sustain this image. However, the power shift brought about by the end of the Cold War did not change French Africa policy as much in the short run as one could potentially expect. Personal relationships were important to delay developments, but another possible explanation may be the lack of direct relevance of the end of the Cold War to France's position in francophone Africa. The French focus continued to be on containing other powers from gaining influence in its backyard. An example of this may be the alleged French desire to contain pro-British factions when France intervened in Rwanda.

However, towards the end of the nineties, the consequences of the Cold War began to manifest themselves clearer in French policy, with the changes in both military and development policy, as illustrated above.

After the emergence of China, the changes in French policy have been more extensive. In development policy, France remains an important donor in absolute numbers, although relatively speaking it gives less assistance than before. Moreover, less of this assistance goes to promote *francophonie*, and France is now also looking to countries outside its *pré carré*. Furthermore, the recent years have seen a shift in the reasoning behind French development aid. President Sarkozy now emphasises promoting stability in Africa, because France sees its aid more directly related to the security of France. This may be explained by the wish to reduce immigration from the continent, and also the fear that instability in Africa may have negative implications for France. The growing Chinese strength may also be viewed positively in France, as some of the interviewed French officials claimed. France wishes to retain its image as a great power, and the emergence of a strong China, and thus a more multipolar world, gives more credential to this image, especially through France's position in the EU.

In terms of military policy, the renegotiations of the defence agreements mark an important step in completely changing Franco-African relations. One of the reasons for this change was the experience from Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in deteriorating relations and French reluctance to intervene in similar situations. With the renegotiations, France will now no longer be required to intervene militarily in these countries. This marks a major milestone in Franco-African military relations, and is probably the greatest change found during the period under study. France no longer has the economic means, nor wish, to intervene in African countries. This is also in line with a greater change in French policy, of ending unilateral interventions and focusing on a multilateral approach to Africa.

In terms of the theoretical perspectives, the emergence of China may have contributed to the changes that occurred in French development policy. The fact that China has few strings attached to its loans and grants has given African leaders more leverage in

the face of France, as was for instance seen when Niger increased its price on uranium sold to France. To meet this challenge, France has attempted to initiate partnerships with China, as described in chapter five. In regards to neopatrimonial relations, one of the reasons why France is turning away from its former colonies may be that personal relations are waning, and the new generation of leaders do not prioritise maintaining these bonds. Now, the neopatrimonial ties that some indicate are reviving under Sarkozy are not the result of the common colonial background, but rather a result of French economic and strategic interests in Africa, and such relations are not confined to francophone Africa, but rather to countries where France has interests.

The developments in military policy follow neorealist principles, and are consistent with the changes in personal relations. To take the former first, continuing to intervene in African countries would make it lose legitimacy internationally. Furthermore, it no longer has the economic means to continue to intervene in Africa. Together, these factors would entail decreasing French power globally, and therefore renegotiation of the defence agreements is rational in a neorealist perspective. With regard to the latter, due to the generational change France no longer has a wish to support only leaders in its former colonies. It is interested in supporting leaders in countries where it has interests, which is to an increasing extent also outside its 'backyard'. These two factors have probably been more important to change French military policy than the increased Chinese presence in Africa.

Overall, French Africa policy has evolved in the past ten years. China's increased presence in Africa has been important, but as long as the two countries do not operate in a zero-sum game, it is difficult to judge to what extent the above-mentioned changes were caused by China's increasingly important role on the continent. For instance, the strategic change in French reasoning for development assistance, namely that of promoting stability in order to prevent increased immigration, is less likely to have been caused by the emergence of China. It is likely, however, that the Chinese engagement will constitute a greater change in French policy precisely as a result of the current French expansion beyond its traditional sphere. China's presence is more

profound outside francophone Africa, and therefore the notion of a ‘threat’ from China will be more realistic as France expands its policies in Africa.

In recent years, the generational change has made the old personal relationships between French and African leaders less important. In its place, strategic interests in the face of ‘new’ world challenges such as terrorism, the continuing need for raw materials, and migration have taken over as important determinants of French Africa policy. The emergence of new non-state actors due to terrorism has not been analysed within this neorealist framework, although it may be a significant factor in the making of the policy.

In terms of the theoretical approaches applied in this study, a combination of neorealist and neopatrimonial perspectives help explain the developments in French Africa policy. As my findings indicate, employing solely a neorealist framework would in this case not have been sufficient, and would have led to the omission of an important factor affecting French Africa policy, namely the personal relationships between French and African leaders. As chapter six illustrates, these bonds have been important, and can account for several of the developments, and in some cases, lack of developments, in French Africa policy. In this study, the combination of these two theoretical approaches has therefore been valuable.

Nevertheless, some problems have been encountered when employing these perspectives, and especially with regards to the emergence of China. This change is much nearer in time than the end of the Cold War, and it is an ongoing development. Thus, one lacks the analytical distance that can contribute to more certain conclusions. This makes the end of the Cold War a more appropriate case to study. Moreover, the findings show that the theoretical frameworks explain more of French Africa policy after the end of the Cold War than it does the last decade with the increased Chinese presence. This can also be seen from the analysis, where there was more focus on – and concrete findings of – the consequences of the end of the Cold War.

In future studies, one may analyse more in-depth the revitalising of neopatrimonial ties under Sarkozy, and how this affects French priorities and policy in Africa. These are

interesting aspects of French policy, particularly because Sarkozy focused on changing exactly these old networks before he was elected. Likewise, the impact of the September 11th attacks, and the new focus on preventing terrorist networks from developing on the African continent, should be further studied, as this will remain an important theme in the future. That France has closed down several of its bases, but kept the base in Djibouti, might be indicative of the increased focus on containing terrorism. In terms of neorealist theory, further study could compare French and British policy, to see whether the theory can be used in other countries with a colonial background, that is, more of a theory-testing case study than the present thesis provides. As indicated in the introduction, the present study has been more interpretative, and has not provided a case for generalisation. In a potential future study, it could therefore be interesting to attempt to test the combination of these two theories to see whether it has validity outside the present framework.

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7.1 Complete List of Interviews

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Appendix- The Interview Guide

1. I will start with a general question, what are your impressions of the change in French Africa policy from 1981 till today?
2. What are the main reasons for these changes, do you think personal relationships or the international context or other reasons are important?
3. What are the most important areas for France in her approach to Africa? Is it culture, power, economic interests, sphere of influence?
4. How much does the president decide in French Africa policy, in comparison to Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs?
5. What is your impression of developments in French development policy, have the amounts increased or decreased, and are the same countries the main beneficiaries now as during Mitterrand and Chirac?
6. With regards to the defence agreements France has with several African countries, do you think these are likely to be reformed?
7. What do you see as the main reason behind the French intervention in Chad in 2008?
8. What was the reason for the French intervention in Ivory Coast in 2003/2004?
9. According to some there was a change in the Africa Cell of the Élysée during Chirac where it became less important, whilst now it is changing back during Sarkozy. How do you view the role of what was previously the Africa Cell? Has it become more important again? And how much power do they have in forming French Africa policy?

10. Looking at French military interventions in Africa since 1981, do you see a change in the pattern of French interventions? Are there now other reasons why France chooses to intervene? When if so, did this change occur?
11. How important have external countries' (China) been in determining French Africa policy? (especially after the end of the Cold War)
12. What are the reasons behind France's move towards more multilateral ties to Africa (for instance RECAMP which is now EUROCAMP)?
13. What do you see as the main reasons for closing down military bases in Africa?
14. Is there a change in French investment in Africa? Has it increased/decreased after Sarkozy came to power (several of the researchers I have interviewed have said that Sarko is much more into business, and that he has adapted a business approach to French Africa policy)?
15. What effect do you think that cohabitation has had to say for French Africa policy (ex when Chirac/Balladur were prime ministers under Mitterrand or when Jospin was prime minister under Chirac)
16. i) How important are the personal relations between Mitterrand/Chirac/Sarkozy and African leaders in determining French Africa policy?
 - a. ii) How important are African leaders in influencing French politics or French Africa policy?
 - b. iii) Has this changed with the coming to power of Sarkozy?

17. The end of the Cold War led to a wave of democratisation, and Mitterrand started to talk about good governance and democracy. Did the end of the Cold War lead to actual changes in French Africa policy?
18. To what extent does the relationship between Africa and France strengthen or weaken France's global position, and how has this evolved since 1981?
19. What were the implications of president Sarkozy having President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf from Liberia in Paris before Bongo from Gabon?
20. French Africa policy has shifted towards focusing on the whole of Africa rather than just the former colonies, has there been a simultaneous change in French aid? Has there been a subsequently change in which countries receive development aid and where diplomatic stations are located?